RECENT NEGRO PROTEST THOUGHT

Theories of Nonviolence and "Black Power"

by

William Ray Marty

Department of Political Science
Duke University

Date: May 7, 1968

Approved:

John H. Hallowell
John H. Hallowell, Supervisor

J Harris Proctor

Richard L. Watson Jr.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the Department of Political
Science in the Graduate School
of Arts and Sciences of
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ABSTRACT

(Political Science--Theory)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the two major philosophies of recent Negro protest thought, nonviolence and "black power," in order to provide: first, a clear rendition of the theories; second, an understanding of the evolution in CORE and SNCC from adherence to nonviolence to advocacy of "black power"; third, a reasoned evaluation of the fundamental tenets of each theory; and, last, an examination of the roles these theories play in a democracy and the meaning these theories have for democracy.

Dr. King, the foremost advocate of nonviolence, adhered to nonviolence as a way of life, seeing it as an expression of Christian love in social action that promised reconciliation between white and black domestically and between nations abroad. His employment of nonviolence was designed to produce a symbolic confrontation of good and evil in a manner calculated to produce political intervention. CORE and SNCC were committed to nonviolence initially, but the brutal suppression they experienced in the Deep South, coupled with the unwillingness of the national government to intervene, produced disillusionment with nonviolence and white America.

Nonviolence became popular because of the quality of its leaders, its psychological benefits to those using it, and because it allowed Negroes, excluded from ballots and frustrated in the courts, to act directly against the segregation system. Its popularity grew because it produced results and brought effective federal intervention. Its popularity began to decline when the most blatant injustices had been removed, when the moral issues

grew more complex, when the methods of resistance grew more subtle, when the demands became economic as well as political or legal, and when the North, like the South, began to be affected, thereby eliminating the outsiders who could correct outrages without personal sacrifices. Once Negroes began to doubt its ability to deliver full equality, nonviolence began to give way to its new rival--"black power."

Nonviolence is a philosophy of universal brotherhood, depending on the ability to reason across race, class and national lines. It is compatible with pluralistic democracy, though its emphasis on civil disobedience and the importance of individual judgment has tendencies toward lawlessness and anarchy. "Black power" is a philosophy of racism, despairing of the ability to reason across race lines, full of hatred, relying on coercion and violence to achieve its goals. It is incompatible with pluralistic democracy.

The claim of nonviolence to be a moral absolute is unreasonable. Coercive nonviolence, such as an economic boycott, sacrifices those things which are said to give nonviolence its special moral qualities in order to be effective, yet effectiveness may elude it. Persuasive nonviolence sacrifices the innocent while waiting to become effective. Nonresisting nonviolence allows evil to go unchecked. Even adherence to nonviolence on religious grounds is subject to dispute.

Neither do the charges of nonviolence against violence always stand. Physical violence does not always represent hatred, produce more suffering and destruction than nonviolence, or result in an endless chain of hatred and revenge. Abstractly, both nonviolence and violence have special merits as techniques of social change; concretely, in relation to Negroes in

America, nonviolence offers hope for further gains, violence offers only harsh suppression and second class citizenship.

The slide toward violence and separatism in the Negro protest reveals that formal political and legal equality is not enough to assure consent to democratic institutions. Negroes have demanded full equality, and if that is denied, then suppression will be required. Yet nothing in formal democracy guarantees that the majority will choose to give equality rather than rely on suppression.

PREFACE

I

In recent years it has been the fashion to declare that political theory is dead or dying. Yet political theory springs from serious consideration of major political difficulties, hence it should be expected that a period of political crisis would renew political speculation and revive political theory. In truth, that is precisely what has been happening in the last decade. American society has been going through a series of domestic crises which pose anew the old questions of political theory--what is a man's obligation to the state, to himself, to the law? What are the morally and politically appropriate techniques of social change? Is nonviolence always feasible or always morally superior to violence? If not, what advantages and disadvantages does each possess? What are the necessary preconditions of social harmony in a pluralistic democracy? It was the Negro protest movement which first forced the basic re-examination of old assumptions; later, of course, the war in Vietnam and its resulting dissent posed many of the same questions. In each case, the partisans of the movements have given answers to these questions both by their theories and by their actions.

This dissertation deals with the recent Negro protest movement. It represents, first, an attempt to understand the theories of nonviolence and "black power" as the exponents of those theories understand them; second, an attempt to relate those theories to each other and to American democracy; and, third, an attempt to evaluate the claims of each on the basis of reason. This dissertation is, then, an essay in the history of ideas, an attempt at political analysis, and an essay in political philosophy. It represents, therefore, an essay in the old political theory, which begins by focusing its attention on the major political problems of the age and attempts to achieve a theoretical understanding which leads, in turn, to conclusions applicable, not to one time and place only, but to a whole range of times and circumstances. The reader, of course, will be the judge of the success of the undertaking.

II

Martin Luther King, whose theories and actions are one of the primary focuses of this dissertation, has been murdered just as this dissertation is being submitted. Whether Dr. King's death will prove to be the death, also, of the nonviolence movement, or the spur to greater nonviolent effort, remains to be seen. But it is fitting to note, at this time, that even though Dr. King did not originate the theory of nonviolence, or its practice in this nation on behalf of Negro rights, nevertheless nonviolence did not achieve prominence in the Negro protest until it burst upon the nation's consciousness under Dr. King's leadership at Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955-1956. It is fitting to note, also, that many of the major landmarks of nonviolence--among them the Montgomery bus boycott, the Birmingham demonstrations and the March on Washington in 1963, and the Selma demonstrations of 1965--have been led by or dominated by Dr. King.

This is not the place for a full assessment of the nonviolent movement, but it can be said, fairly, that the nation owes a great debt of gratitude to Dr. King and those he led, for he, and they, have brought us much closer to the just society to which we have aspired in our better moments as a nation, and it may be added that the full success of our democracy depends upon the successful completion of the journey Dr. King led for one brief, but vital, decade.

III

I am pleased to acknowledge here my special indebtedness to the following people: first, to my wife, who has waited patiently, with not a single complaint, for me to complete that which others accomplish in much less time; second, to Professor John H. Hallowell, Chairman of the Department of Political Science at Duke University, who has enlarged my philosophical perspective, and shaped it, and who will recognize in this dissertation areas of special indebtedness to his thought and teaching; and third, to the Dean of the Graduate School, David Martin, and the Assistant Dean, Dale B.J. Randall, as well as Professor J. Harris Proctor, Director of Graduate Studies in Political Science, all of whom have proved to be more concerned with the special problems of this student than with the necessity of a strict adherence to school regulations concerning time limits.

I would like to acknowledge, also, my debt to certain organizations: first, to the Southern Fellowships Fund, which allowed me to pick Duke University for graduate studies and financed those studies for three years; second, to the Lilly Endowment Research Program in Christianity and Politics, which authorized funds for a research trip which, due to changed conditions, I never made. The grant, though unused, was appreciated. And finally, to Memphis State University, which provided funds for a research trip for a portion of one summer.

IV

~~I am~~ grateful to the following individuals and publishers for permission to quote from books, periodicals or articles held in their copyright: Ronald Berquist and *The Washington Post* ("Rights Rally Hears King in Chicago," July 11, 1966); The American Academy of Political and Social Science (Marvin Rich, "The Congress of Racial Equality and Its Strategy," *The Annals*, January, 1965); The Beacon Press (Broderick and Maier, eds., *The Negro Protest*, and Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*); The Curtis Publishing Company (Martin Luther King, Jr., "Negroes Are Not Moving Too Fast," *The Saturday Evening Post*, November 7, 1964); Harper and Row (Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power*; Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength To Love*, *Stride Toward Freedom*, and *Why We Can't Wait*; and L.D. Reddick, *Crusader Without Violence: A Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*); H.H.H. Publishing Company ("Interview with Dr. Martin Luther King," *Playboy*, January, 1965); McCall Corporation (Martin Luther King, Jr., *et al*, "What Can We Do To Keep Peace On Earth," *Redbook*, January, 1965); *The Memphis Press-Scimitar* (various quotations, 1967); Memphis Publishing Company (*The Commercial Appeal*, various quotations, 1966-1967); The Nation Company, Inc. (Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Last Steep Ascent," *Nation*, October 13, 1962, and "Who Is Their God?" *Nation*, March 14, 1966); The New American Library (Jack Newfield, *A Prophetic Minority*); Newsweek, Inc. ("A Power Player Sets the Goals," August 22, 1966; "Black Power," June 27, 1966; "Growl of the

Panther," May 30, 1966; "Panther on the Prowl," February 7, 1966; "S.N.C.C.'s 'Dissent,'" June 17, 1966; "The March Meredith Began," June 20, 1966; "Tough Years Ahead," August 30, 1965; and "Which Way for the Negro," May 15, 1967); The New York Times Company (*New York Times*, various quotations, 1965-1967); Rand McNally and Company (James Farmer, "The New Jacobins and Full Emancipation," in Robert Goldwin, ed., *100 Years of Emancipation*); Random House, Inc. (James Farmer, *Freedom*--*When*?; Anthony Lewis and the *New York Times*, *Portrait of A Decade*: *The Second American Revolution*; and Robert Penn Warren, *Who Speaks for the Negro*?); Simon and Schuster, Inc. (James Peck, *Freedom Ride*); The Southern Regional Council, Inc. (Martin Luther King, Jr., "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," *New South*, December, 1961); Time, Inc. (John K. Jessup, "An Urgent New Reach to be Equal," *Life*, June 3, 1966; and "Newark: Post-riot Summit for Black Power," August 4, 1967); The United Church Press (Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Measure of a Man*); William Morrow and Company, Inc. (Len Holt, *The Summer that Didn't End*); and W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., (William McCord, *Mississippi*: *The Long, Hot Summer*).

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

PREFACE v

I. MARTIN LUTHER KING 2

II. THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY 100

III. THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE 165

IV. "BLACK POWER" OR NONVIOLENCE? CARMICHAEL AND HAMILTON VERSUS KING 299

V. NONVIOLENCE, "BLACK POWER," AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY 357

BIBLIOGRAPHY 400

RECENT NEGRO PROTEST THOUGHT

THEORIES OF NONVIOLENCE AND "BLACK POWER"

Chapter I

MARTIN LUTHER KING

An understanding of the philosophy and role of nonviolence in the Negro protest movement must begin with Martin Luther King, Jr., Negro Baptist minister, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and recipient in 1964 of the Nobel prize for peace. This man, more than any other, established nonviolence as a proper and effective instrument of mass protest and social reform in America. He was able to accomplish this because he was both a theoretician and a leader of the movement. By his theoretical exposition he provided understanding and justification for nonviolence. By his active leadership he demonstrated in the most effective manner, by its results, the practicality of nonviolence in gaining social reform. No other activist leader of the movement found time early in a decade of social revolution to write and publish the articles and books necessary to formulate and defend the philosophy of nonviolence; no other activist has been as successful in influencing American policy by his campaigns. Dr. King stands alone as the foremost advocate and leader of nonviolence in the decade of its greatest success in this nation, 1955-1965, and it is by the standards he has imposed that the departures of other leaders and other theorists of nonviolence may best be judged. Dr. King was not the first to employ nonviolent protest on behalf of Negro rights--the Congress of Racial Equality, for example, had conducted nonviolent sit-ins in Chicago in 1942--but he was the leader and spokesman for the first sustained mass protest, the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-1956. That protest, successfully concluded by legal action, transformed the Negro population of Montgomery into a unified community able to maintain a boycott of their primary means of transportation for over a year. Its dignity and nonviolence, even in the face of shootings and bombings, legal harassment and stubborn opposition, dramatized the injustice of the segregation pattern and the obstinacy of the segregationists. The contrast in the reasonableness of the goals sought by many whites and Negroes in Montgomery and the further contrast in the methods used to obtain or preserve those goals caught the attention and imagination of the Negro community, the nation and the world. This boycott made Dr. King, newly arrived in Montgomery, a national leader and spokesman for Negro rights. He maintained and enhanced that position by his later highly successful campaigns in Birmingham and Selma.

Background to Nonviolence

Background and Education

Martin Luther King, Jr., was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1929.[1] His name was recorded as Michael by a mistake of the physician and it was only in 1934 that the error was legally corrected. His father was, and is, pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, though he now shares that pulpit with his more famous son, Martin Luther King, Jr., and his brother, Alfred Daniel King, are the fourth consecutive generation of ministers in the family.[1] He has an older sister, Willie Christine King.

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[1] Bibliographical details of Dr. King's family and formative years are taken from L. D. Reddick, Crusader Without Violence: A Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr., (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), unless otherwise noted. Dr. Reddick has served as the official historian for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Atlanta provided an urban setting for Martin King's childhood. The King residence at 501 Auburn Avenue Northeast was on one of the famous streets of Negro America, a center of the Negro community and commerce. It was a large house, as befitted the pastor of Ebenezer Church, and the elder King's position, while it did not afford his family affluence, did protect it from the harsh poverty of the depression years and it provided also a certain prominence in the Negro community.

The family was united and close; it was strongly dominated by the elder King. Contacts with whites were limited by the Reverend King, Sr. He himself refused to accept less than dignified treatment at the hands of white merchants and policemen and he tried to prevent the type of situation that might lead to the humiliation of any member of his family. Still, it was impossible to grow up even in a Negro section of urban Atlanta without being aware of both racial and economic injustices, and these experiences had an important influence upon Martin King's later development, by his own account.[2]

Even as a child, Martin King, Jr., appeared to have a dislike of violence. He would not defend himself against attack--on one occasion he was beaten all the way down a flight of stairs by another boy without making any attempt at defense[1]--and on only two occasions does he seem to have attacked someone. One of those he attacked was his brother, who was teasing their sister to the point of tears. Martin could not get his brother to stop so he "picked up the telephone and slammed it down on his brother's head, knocking him senseless."[2] Cold water revived him. Martin fought one other time--in defense of his brother when three others had jumped on him.[3]

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[1] Martin Luther King, Jr., Why We Can't Wait, (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 95.

[2] Ibid., Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), pp. 90-91.

As a child, Martin Luther King was apparently reluctant to fight, but on two occasions he may have attempted suicide. In the first case, his brother accidentally knocked his grandmother unconscious. Martin thought she was dead and jumped from a second-story window. He was unhurt. His second attempt, by the same means, occurred when he was informed of his grandmother's death. He was badly shaken but again uninjured.[4]

Martin King's primary and secondary education was gained in Atlanta's public (and segregated) schools, except for two years in the private Laboratory High School associated with Atlanta University, a Negro school. He was, according to Dr. Reddick, a "B" plus student and he skipped several grades.[5] He was, in addition to being a good student, president of a student organization and moderately active in extracurricular events. Following high school, Martin entered Morehouse College in Atlanta, a private institution, as his father had before him. He considered medicine and law as a career, but by his senior year he had decided upon the ministry. He majored in sociology and minored in English. He was a member of the campus NAACP chapter. He was a good but not brilliant student. He graduated in 1948 at the age of nineteen.

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[1] Reddick, p. 59.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 60.

[4] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

[5] Ibid., p. 54.

Martin Luther King went to Crozer Theological Seminary, a Baptist school in Chester, Pennsylvania, after graduating from Morehouse. Crozer was the first integrated school he had attended, and he went there on a scholarship. His first year course centered on history and criticism of the Bible, the second year on church history and the major prophets, his third year psychology of religion, ethics, and social philosophy. Both the subject matter and the competition seemed to have stimulated his best efforts and he established an outstanding academic record, far superior to his record at Morehouse. He was an "A" student and was chosen valedictorian.[1]

At Crozer Martin was involved in an incident in which a student from North Carolina threatened him with a pistol. Martin remained calm and no violence occurred. Afterward Martin refused to make an issue of the incident, and this greatly increased his popularity. Dr. Reddick records that: "His nonvindictiveness in the . . . case increased Martin's popularity immensely. He was easily the man of the campus in the eyes of his fellow students as well as the faculty. He was elected president of the student government and was considered by all to be the current seminarian who was most likely to succeed."[2]

Martin Luther King's record at Crozer won him the Pearl Plafkner award for scholarship and the Lewis Crozer Fellowship for $1,200 for two additional years of graduate study at a school of his selection. Having received his B. D. from Crozer in the spring of 1951, he entered Boston University in the fall as a candidate for the doctorate. While at Boston University, he took a few courses in philosophy at Harvard, just as he had taken additional courses at Pennsylvania University while attending Crozer Theological Seminary. As he had done at Crozer, Martin distinguished himself at Boston University. His adviser, L. Harold DeWolf, commented: "Of all the doctorate students I have had at Boston University--some fifty in all--I would rate Martin King among the top five."[1] Martin Luther King accepted the pastorate of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, before completing his dissertation which was on Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman. He successfully completed his dissertation and its oral defense in time to receive his Ph. D. in systematic theology in June, 1955. Six months later, Mrs. Rosa Parks, a Negro, was arrested for refusing to give her seat to a white on a bus in Montgomery and Dr. Martin Luther King's career as a leader of Negro protest was about to begin.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Pilgrimage to Nonviolence

Martin Luther King has written several accounts of his pilgrimage to nonviolence.[2] They differ slightly in details, but the broad outlines of his intellectual development are rendered reasonably clear. The following account is derived from them.

Martin King was partially protected from direct contact with racial discrimination and economic exploitation in his youth by his father's secure economic and social position within a Negro ghetto. His father, an important man in the Negro community, discouraged those types of contacts with whites which were likely to end in humiliation. Martin King, Jr., relates that he was discouraged by his father from taking any job in which he would work with whites,[1] and he recalls that he attended a segregated movie theatre downtown on only one occasion.[2] Nevertheless, despite his father's wishes and the insulation of the ghetto, he early became aware of racial discrimination and injustice. One of his earliest remembrances of the segregation pattern, according to his biographer, was the time when he was no longer allowed to play with white sons of the grocer across the street.[3] On another occasion he and his father entered a shoe store and seated themselves. The clerk told them he would be happy to serve them at the seats in the rear. The elder King refused to move. They left without the shoes. Martin King, Jr., was then six years old.[4] Later, in high school, Martin went on a school trip by bus. He was forced to give up his seat to a white who boarded later and when he and his companions were too slow in doing so they were cursed as "black sons of bitches". [5] "And so we stood up in the aisle for the 90 miles to Atlanta. That night will never leave my memory. It was the angriest I have ever been in my life."[6] He was then fourteen, and he was returning from an oratorical contest he had won. His topic was "The Negro and the Constitution."[7] Segregation has more barbarous consequences than humiliation on a bus, however, and Martin was fully aware of them.

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[1] Cited by Reddick, p. 88.

[2] See, especially, "Pilgrimage to Non-Violence," The Christian Century, (April 13, 1960),439-441; "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," in Stride Toward Freedom, pp. 90-107; and "Pilgrimage to Non-Violence," in Strength To Love, (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 135-142.

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1. Reddick, p. 57. 2. Ibid., p. 75. 3. Ibid., p. 56. 4. Ibid., p.57.

5. "Interview with Martin Luther King," Playboy, 12 (January, 1965), pp. 65-66.

6. Ibid. 7. Ibid.

> I had passed spots where Negroes had been savagely lynched, and had watched the Ku Klux Klan on its rides at night. I had seen police brutality with my own eyes, and watched Negroes receive the most tragic injustice in the courts. All these things had done something to my growing personality. I had come perilously close to resenting all white people.[1]

His youth in Atlanta taught Martin things besides the bitterness of racial injustice. It taught him that "the inseparable twin of racial injustice was economic injustice."[2] And it taught him also, after he had worked for two summers in a factory hiring both whites and Negroes, that "the poor white was exploited just as much as the poor Negro."[3] These experiences of racial injustice and economic exploitation formed in the young Martin Luther King a concern for social justice that shaped his later thought.[4]

At Morehouse College Martin King encountered a social theory that offered a means of obtaining social justice. It was a theory of noncooperation with evil, of civil disobedience, and though it was not labeled as such, a theory of nonviolent resistance. The author was Henry David Thoreau. The work, which he read and read again, was the _Essay on Civil Disobedience_.[5] Only later was Martin Luther King to adopt nonviolence as an intellectual doctrine, later still as a way of life, but in the first days of the Montgomery bus boycott, before the theoretical framework for that protest had been established, he turned to Thoreau's famous essay for justification.[6]

From Morehouse Martin Luther King had gone to Crozer Theological Seminary to prepare for the ministry. There he read _Christianity and the Social Crisis_, by Walter Rauschenbusch, one of the leading exponents of the

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[1] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 90. [2] _Ibid_. [3] _Ibid_. [4] _Ibid_, p. 91. [5] _Ibid_. [6] _Ibid_, p. 91.

"social gospel." The work "left an indelible imprint on my thinking by giving me a theological basis for the social concern which had already grown up in me as a result of my early experiences.[1] In this work Martin Luther King found an understanding of Christianity that made Christianity relevant to the social conditions and problems around him. He was not in full agreement with that understanding.

> I felt that he was a victim of the nineteenth-century "cult of inevitable progress," which led him to an unwarranted optimism concerning human nature. Morover, he came perilously close to identifying the Kingdom of God with a particular social and economic system, a temptation to which the church must never surrender.[2]

But Martin Luther King felt that Walter Rauschenbusch had made a great contribution to Protestantism:

> ...Rauschenbusch gave to American Protestantism a sense of social responsibility that it should never lose. The gospel at its best deals with the whole man, not only his soul but his body, not only his spiritual well-being but also his material well-being. A religion that professes a concern for the souls of men and is not equally concerned about the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them, is a spiritually moribund religion.[3]

After reading Walter Rauschenbusch, King read the social and ethical theories of philosophers "from Plato and Aristotle down to Rousseau, Hobbes, Bentham, Mill, and Locke."[4] He notes that he found them "stimulating," but he merely lists them and passes on in his accounts of his journey to nonviolence. Karl Marx gets more attention. During the Christmas vacation of 1949, Martin King "carefully scrutinized" the Communist Manifesto and Das Kapital.[5] He also read interpretive works on Marx and Lenin.[6] He records that he rejected Communism's materialism, its ethical relativeism, and its political totalitarianism, and he concluded that it was "basically evil."[1] Nevertheless, there was something of value in Communism:

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[1] Ibid., p. 91. [2] Strength to Love, p. 138. [3] Ibid.

[4] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 92. [5] Ibid. [6] Ibid.

> With all of its false assumptions and evil methods, communism grew as a protest against the hardships of the underprivileged. Communism in theory emphasized a classless society, and a concern for social justice, though the world knows from sad experience that in practice it created new classes and a new lexicon of injustice. The Christian ought always to be challenged by and protest against unfair treatment of the poor, for Christianity is itself such a protest, nowhere expressed more eloquently than in Jesus' words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.[2]

Martin Luther King's reading of Marx did not leave him a Communist,[3] but neither did it leave him a capitalist. He states that capitalism has failed to see the truth in collective enterprise and Marxism has failed to see the truth in individual enterprise. He adds that the Kingdom of God is neither.[4]

Martin Luther King, who now describes himself as a pacifist,[5] first heard the pacifist position described and defended by A. J. Muste in a lecture at Crozer Theological Seminary. He was "deeply moved," but "I felt that while war could never be a positive or absolute good, it could serve as a negative good in the sense of preventing the spread and growth of an evil force. War, horrible as it is, might be preferable to surrender to a totalitarian system--Nazi, Fascist, or Communist."[6]

Christianity preaches a gospel of love, but for a period Martin Luther King seriously doubted its power to solve social problems. He notes that he had been reading Friedrich Nietzsche--portions of The Genealogy of Morals and all of The Will to Power--and this may have been a factor in his loss of faith in the power of love.[1] The spell of Nietzsche was broken by Dr. Mordecai Johnson in a sermon in Philadelphia. Dr. Johnson had just returned from India where he had been greatly impressed by Mohandas Gandhi. He spoke of Gandhi that day, and "His message was so profound and electrifying that I left the meeting and bought a half dozen books on Gandhi's life and works."[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 92-93. [2] Ibid., pp. 93-94. [3] Ibid., pp. 94-95.

[4] For King's critique of Communism see "How Should a Christian View Communism?" in Strength to Love, pp. 93-100.

[5] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 95. [6] Strength to Love, p. 140.

The teachings of Gandhi had a profound effect upon Martin Luther King. Here is his description of that effect:

> Like most people, I had heard of Gandhi, but I had never studied him seriously. As I read I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of nonviolent resistance. I was particularly moved by the Salt March to the Sea and his numerous fasts. The whole concept of "Satyagraha" (Satya is truth which equals love, and agraha is force; "Satyagraha," therefore, means truth-force or love force) was profoundly significant to me. As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potentcy in the area of social reform. Prior to reading Gandhi, I had about concluded that the ethics of Jesus were only effective in individual relationships. The "turn the other cheek" philosophy and the "love your enemies" philosophy were only valid, I felt, when individuals were in conflict with other individuals; when racial groups and nations were in conflict a more realistic approach seemed necessary. But after reading Gandhi, I saw how utterly mistaken I was.
>
> Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. Love for Gandhi was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking for so many months. The intellectual and moral satisfaction that I failed to gain from the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, the revolutionary methods of Marx and Lenin, the social-contract theory of Hobbes, the "back to

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[1] Ibid., pp. 95-96.

[2] Ibid., p. 96.

> nature" optimism of Rousseau, and the superman philosophy of Nietzsche, I found in the nonviolent resistance philosophy of Gandhi. I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.[1]

The relationship between Christianity and the teachings of Mohandas Gandhi in Martin Luther King's social philosophy is expressed in these words: "I came to see for the first time that the Christian doctrine of love, operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence, is one of the most potent weapons available to an oppressed people in their struggle for freedom."[2] In the teachings of Gandhi, King found, not a strange and alien doctrine, but a practical technique for applying Christian love to the social situation. Christ's teachings of love were seen, for the first time, not as an impossible ideal but as a very practical possibility. In Montgomery, according to Dr. King, "Nonviolent resistance had emerged as the technique of the movement, while love stood as the regulating ideal. In other words, Christ furnished the spirit and motivation, while Gandhi furnished the method."[3] Such a division of the contributions of each may appear unfair to Mohandas Gandhi, the Mahatma or great-souled one, whose spirit was certainly essential to the development and success of his techniques of nonviolence. Still, it is obvious that few Negroes in Montgomery had heard of Gandhi and that fewer still considered his teachings morally binding upon them. To them, the moral appeal of nonviolence was that it was held to be an expression of Christian love. As Dr. King says:

> From the beginning a basic philosophy guided the movement. This guiding principle has since been referred to variously as nonviolent resistance,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 96-97.

[2] Strength to Love, p. 138.

[3] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 85.

> noncooperation, and passive resistance. But in the first days of the protest none of these expressions was mentioned; the phrase most often heard was "Christian love." It was the Sermon on the Mount, rather than a doctrine of passive resistance, that initially inspired the Negroes of Montgomery to dignified social action. It was Jesus of Nazareth that stirred the Negroes to protest with the creative weapon of love.

Gandhi, it may be added, had the highest respect for Christ and especially the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. The spirit of their teachings of love was very similar.

The discovery of the philosophy of Mohandas Gandhi did not end Martin Luther King's intellectual pilgrimage to nonviolence. King had accepted Gandhi's method of nonviolence as a practical expression of Christian love, but his faith in that method was shaken by another Christian's apparently devastating critique of Christian pacifism--the nearest Christian equivalent of Gandhi's philosophy and methodology.[2] That Christian was Reinhold Niebuhr, who had been at one time the head of a pacifist organization, the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Niebuhr left that organization in the 1930's because he saw in the rise of Hitler and totalitarian fascism a threat that had to be met by armed force if civilization was to survive. Martin Luther King encountered Niebuhr's critique of pacifism in Moral Man and Immoral Society, in which Niebuhr argued that there was no intrinsic moral difference between violent and nonviolent resistance.[3] Though confused at first, Dr. King later began to see flaws in Niebuhr's position.

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1. Ibid., p. 84. Dr. Reddick states that perhaps the first public comparison of the bus boycott to the techniques of Gandhi was made by Miss Juliette Morgan, a white librarian, in a letter to a local newspaper on December 12, 1955, a week after the first mass rally addressed by Dr. King. Reddick, p. 133.

2. Stride Toward Freedom, p. 98. 3. Ibid.

> For instance, many of his statements revealed that he interpreted pacifism as a sort of passive nonresistance to evil expressing naive trust in the power of love. But this was a serious distortion. My study of Gandhi convinced me that true pacifism is not nonresistance to evil, but nonviolent resistance to evil. Between the two positions, there is a world of difference. Gandhi resisted evil with as much vigor and power as the violent resister, but he resisted with love instead of hate. True pacifism is not unrealistic submission to evil power, as Niebuhr contends. It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love, in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflicter of it, since the latter only multiplies the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe, while the former may develop a sense of shame in the opponent, and thereby bring about a transformation and change of heart.[1]

Reinhold Niebuhr's critique of pacifism was rejected by King, but he gained from Niebuhr an awareness of the full potential for evil in man, especially in man's collective actions, and a companion awareness of the complexity of human motivations, even in the best of men.[2] Niebuhr made King realize pacifism's strong tendency toward self-rightousness, an attitude that could alienate those whom love was supposed to conquer, and also its too easy optimism concerning human nature.[3]

> It was my revolt against these attitudes under the influence of Niebuhr that accounts for the fact that in spite of my strong leaning toward pacifism, I never joined a pacifist organization. After reading Niebuhr, I tried to arrive at a realistic pacifism. In other words, I came to see the pacifist position not as sinless but as the lesser evil in the circumstances. I felt then, and I feel now, that the pacifist would have a greater appeal if he did not claim to be free from the moral dilemmas that the Christian nonpacifist confronts.[4]

From Crozer Theological Seminary King went to Boston University. There he heard many advocates of nonviolence--faculty, students and visitors--as the School of Theology, influenced by Dean Walter Muelder and Professor Allen Knight Chalmers, was deeply sympathetic to pacifism.[5] Dr. King recalls that:

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., pp. 98-99.

[3] Ibid., p. 99.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 100.

> Both Dean Muelder and Dr. Chalmers had a passion for social justice that stemmed, not from a superficial optimism, but from a deep faith in the possibilities of human beings when they allowed themselves to become co-workers with God. It was at Boston University that I came to see that Niebuhr had over-emphasized the corruption of human nature. His pessimism concerning human nature was not balanced by an optimism concerning divine nature. He was so involved in diagnosing man's sickness of sin that he overlooked the cure of grace.[1]

It was also at Boston that King made a study of the philosophy of Hegel. He took a course dealing with Hegel's Phenomenology of the Mind, but he supplemented it by reading Philosophy of History and Philosophy of Right. The dialectical process described by Hegel impressed upon King the importance of struggle in the process of growth,[2] a theme that recurs frequently in King's later speeches and writings. George Barrett, writing for the New York Times Magazine of March 3, 1957, caught upon this theme and described King's leadership of the Montgomery bus boycott as a "fusion of Christianity, Hegelianism, and Gandhism."[3] According to Barrett, King has "transcribed Hegel's philosophy of strength through struggle, harmony out of pain, in terms of the Negro living in the South, and thereby given the Negro a new awareness /and therefore, a new strength./"[4] Dr. King, it should be noted, has not placed much stress upon Hegel in his elaboration of the doctrine of nonviolence.

Thoreau, Rauschenbusch, Gandhi, Hegel, and most important, Christ--these were the mentors in Martin Luther King's pilgrimage to nonviolence. By 1954 Martin Luther King had come to the conclusion that "nonviolent resistance was one of the most potent weapons available to oppressed people in their quest for social justice."[5] At that time, however, Martin Luther King's commitment to nonviolence was intellectual only; he had no plans or intention of organizing resistance.[1] Dr. King neither started the protest in Montgomery nor suggested it.[2] Indeed, his personal pilgrimage to nonviolence was completed in Montgomery. As Dr. King puts it:

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 101.

[3] Cited in Anthony Lewis and The New York Times, Portrait of a Decade: The Second American Revolution (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 79.

[4] Ibid., p. 82.

[5] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 101.

> The experience in Montgomery did more to clarify my thinking in regard to the question of nonviolence than all of the books that I had read. As the days unfolded, I became more and more convinced of the power of nonviolence. Nonviolence became more than a method to which I gave intellectual assent; it became a commitment to a way of life. Many issues I had not cleared up intellectually concerning nonviolence were now resolved within the sphere of practical action.[3]

There have been developments in Martin Luther King's philosophy of nonviolence since Montgomery that need to be recorded. One development has been his acceptance of nonviolence in international relations. At one time he had held that:

> War, horrible as it is, might be preferable to surrender to a totalitarian system. But I now believe that the potential destructiveness of modern weapons totally rules out the possibility of war ever again achieving a negative good. If we assume that mankind has a right to survive, then we must find an alternative to war and destruction. In our day of space vehicles and guided ballistic missiles, the choice is either nonviolence or nonexistence.[4]

This rejection of violence in international relations is couched in terms of prudential considerations--nonviolence or death--rather than in terms of an absolutist ethic of nonviolence. Dr. King does not say that all wars have always been wrong, only that modern technology threatens "the potential annihilation of the whole human race," and therefore "there can be no justification for any large-scale war."[5] The difference is important in

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1. Ibid. 2. Ibid. 3. Strength to Love, p. 139.

4. Ibid., p. 140.

5. King, et al, "What Can We Do To Keep Peace On Earth?", Redbook, 124 (January, 1965), 81.

that Dr. King once again fails to condemn all violence in all situations. The truth of the matter is that, despite his statements to the effect that he is committed to nonviolence not only intellectually but as a way of life, he is not absolutely committed to nonviolence in all situations. Dr. King approved, for example, President Eisenhower's use of troops in Little Rock, Arkansas, to protect school desegregation,[1] and he approved the use of federal marshals and troops in Mississippi to secure the admission of James Meredith to the University.

> More than anything else, it is regrettable that United States marshals, a federalized National Guard and troops of the United States Army were the only means by which the admission of James Meredith could be secured. As a devotee of the nonviolent discipline, I am also a pacifist. Though I regret the use of force in the Mississippi situation, nevertheless, in my humble judgment, it was necessary and justifiable. Whereas I abhor the use of arms and the thought of war, I do believe in the intelligent use of police power. Though a pacifist, I am not an anarchist. Mississippi's breakdown of law and order demanded the utilization of a police action to quell the disorder and enforce the law of the land. Armed force that intelligently exercises police power, making civil arrests in which full due process is observed, is not functioning as an army in military engagement, so I feel the presence of troops in Oxford, Mississippi, is a police force seeking to preserve law and order rather than an army engaging in destructive warfare.[2]

Dr. King's thought has been influenced in the last few years, he says, by his personal burdens and suffering.[3] He has been jailed more than ten times in Georgia and Alabama, his home has been bombed on two occasions, a day rarely passes in which he or his family is not threatened with death, and he has been the victim of a nearly fatal stabbing.[1] He concludes:

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[1] Reddick, p. 208.

[2] King, "Who is their God?", The Nation, CXCV (October 13, 1962, 210.

[3] Strength to Love, p. 140.

> I must admit that at times I have felt that I could no longer bear such a heavy burden, and have been tempted to retreat to a more quiet and serene life. But every time such a temptation appeared, something came to strengthen my determination. I have learned now that the Master's burden is light precisely when we take his yoke upon us.[2]

Dr. King's personal trials have taught him, also, "the value of unmerited suffering."[3] He has found that one may react to suffering either with bitterness or by transforming the suffering into creative force.[4]

> ...I have attempted to see my personal ordeals as an opportunity to transfigure myself and heal the people involved in the tragic situation which now obtains. I have lived these last few years with the conviction that unearned suffering is redemptive. There are some who still find the cross a stumbling block, others consider it foolishness, but I am more convinced than ever before that it is the power of God unto social and individual salvation. So like the Apostle Paul I can now humbly, yet proudly, say, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."[5]

Finally, Dr. King's trials and sufferings have strengthened his faith in a personal God and drawn him, he says, closer to that God.

> ...in the past the idea of a personal God was little more than a metaphysical category that I found theologically and philosophically satisfying. Now it is a living reality that has been validated in the experiences of everyday life. God has been profoundly real to me in recent years. In the midst of lonely days and dreary nights I have heard an inner voice saying, "Lo, I will be with you." When the chains of fear and the manacles of frustration have all but stymied my efforts, I have felt the power of God transforming the fatigue of despair into the buoyancy of hope. I am convinced that the universe is under the control of a loving purpose, and that in the struggle for righteousness man has cosmic companionship.[6]

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[1] Ibid. He was stabbed by an apparently demented Negro woman while autographing books outside a store in Harlem. The weapon, an eight-inch letter opener, penetrated very near his heart, but he recovered fairly rapidly after a critical second day. Reddick, pp. 229-232.

[2] Strength to Love, pp. 140-141. [3] Ibid., p. 141.

[4] Ibid. [5] Ibid. [6] Ibid.

The Anchoring Faith

Martin Luther King is a Baptist minister, a doctor of philosophy in the field of systemic theology. He came to national prominence as the president and leading spokesman of the Montgomery Improvement Association, an organization led, in the main, by Christian ministers, meeting in Christian churches, and followed by their congregations. He later formed an organization of Christian ministers to combat racial injustice in the South and in the nation. That organization was named, appropriately, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. No one can know Dr. King's background, his activities, or read his speeches, articles and books without realizing that, for him, nonviolence is rooted in Christian faith. His belief in the voluntary acceptance of suffering, in the necessity of returning love for hate, in the superiority of peace and reconciliation to revenge and domination, derive from the teachings and life of Jesus. Yet Dr. King's position, while rooted in Christian faith, is at variance with that of many of his fellow Christians who do not regard nonviolence in certain types of social situations as an obligation imposed by their faith. An understanding of Dr. King's doctrine of nonviolence requires, therefore, an examination of the Christian faith that provides its foundation and some notice of those beliefs that separate him from many of his fellow Christians.

American Protestantism may be divided, quite roughly, into fundamentalism, liberalism, neo-orthodoxy and orthodoxy. These schools of thought and theology cross denominational lines and one may find ministers of the same denomination holding very different theological positions upon the nature of God, Jesus, man, and the human situation. Dr. King has made comments in his writings indicating that he was brought up in a strict fundamentalist tradition, but later found that position unsatisfactory and adopted whole-heartedly most of the views of Protestant liberalism. Further experience and consideration of the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr led King to see great weaknesses in the liberal position, especially in its understanding of the nature of man, but he did not adopt the neo-orthodox position of Niebuhr. Dr. King's present position seems to have much of the optimism associated with Protestant liberalism, but it is derived from a faith in the power and mercy of God rather than what Dr. King now regards as the illusions of the liberals concerning the goodness of man and the inevitability of progress.

The nature and attributes of God. The widest difference in American Protestantism upon the nature of God is between the more radical liberals who stress the immanence of God in nature to the point of equating God with nature and the more traditional or orthodox Protestants who stress God's transcendent and personal nature. In this dispute Dr. King is clearly of the more orthodox persuasion. He has contrasted God and nature by noting that nature is impersonal and indifferent. When nature's laws are violated: "...she has no alternative except to follow inexorably her path of uniformity. Nature does not and cannot forgive."[1] God, in contrast, is a being of pure spirit,[2] possessing self-consciousness and self-direction,[3] interested in man and intervening in history on his behalf,[4] both evoking and answering prayers.[1] God's relationship to man is that of a loving father.[2] God is merciful and forgiving,[3] indeed, his essential nature is love,[4] but he is also a God of justice and wrath, who punished Israel for her evil deeds,[5] and a God of power who can lay low the most mighty and conquer evil in all its forms.[6] God, then, is a conscious being, interested in man's destiny, intervening on his behalf in history, omnipotent yet not arbitrary, demanding justice and visiting his wrath upon evil, but merciful and loving also, having to man the relation of a loving father. Faith in such a God is a mighty bulwark to those who take upon themselves the burden of nonviolent action in the face of threats and possible death. It gives to them the strength and courage of those who know that they fight with God's aid in a cause that will, eventually, prevail.[7]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] King, The Measure of a Man, (Philadelphia: The Christian Education Press, 1959), p. 4.

[3] Strength to Love, p. 141.

[4] Ibid., p. 104.

Of Jesus. Christians generally agree that Jesus was an incomparable ethical teacher whose life provided the perfect illustration of his teachings. Fundamental disagreements arise when any further claims are made concerning his nature. Again, the greatest differences in American Protestantism are between those theological liberals who view Jesus as different from other men only in that he most fully expressed the potential that is in every man, and the more conservative or orthodox who stress the divine nature of Jesus as the only begotten Son of God. Dr. King apparently holds the latter view, for he speaks of Jesus as Lord and Master,[8]

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[1] Ibid., p. 142.

[2] Ibid., p. 123.

[3] Ibid., p. 133.

[4] Ibid., p. 133.

[5] Ibid., p. 6.

[6] See "Our God Is Able," in Strength to Love, pp. 100ff.

[7] Stride Toward Freedom, pp. 106-107.

[8] Strength to Love, p. 9.

Savior,[1] the one in whom God dwells,[2] and through whom God frees man from the dominion of death.[3] Dr. King's biographer, L.D. Reddick, states that: "King is reluctant to list Jesus Christ as a hero, for he thinks of him not only as a natural, that is, historical, personality but also as supernatural."[4] If this view of Dr. King's position is correct, then he holds the teachings of Jesus to be more than the wisdom of a good and wise man, to be, in fact, the authoritative word of God, binding upon him and binding on the conscience of all Christians.

The nature of the teachings of Jesus are exemplified by the Sermon on the Mount. That sermon is both too long and too familiar to be quoted here, but its spirit may be evoked and its relevance to the doctrine of nonviolence shown by certain phrases abstracted from it by Professor Reddick.

> Blessed are the meek . . . the merciful . . . the peacemakers . . . they which are persecuted. . . . Ye are the salt of the earth . . . the light of the world. . . . Whosoever is angry with his brother . . . shall be in danger of the judgment. . . . Agree with thine adversary quickly. . . . If thy right hand offend thee. . . . Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. . . . Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. . . . Judge not, that ye be not judged. . . . And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? . . . Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves . . . every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. . . . Thy kingdom come. They will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.[5]

The Sermon on the Mount with its "sublime teachings on love" and the Gandhian method of nonviolence provided the spirit and technique of the protest at Montgomery[1] that launched Dr. King on his career as spokesman and leader of a nonviolent protest movement. Dr. King regards the Sermon on the Mount as "a wonderful statement of the practical solution of the major problems that man must face in any generation."[2]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 127.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 13.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 86.

[4] Reddick, pp. 14-15.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 15.

The assertion that the Sermon on the Mount holds the practical solution of major problems separates Dr. King from many Christians. Some, like most Roman Catholics, regard the ethical demands of the Sermon on the Mount to be counsels of perfection, applicable to those who choose the religious life of priest or nun, but not necessary to salvation and not a practical guide to everyday life and politics. Most Protestants regard these ethical demands as applicable to all, either as a simple human possibility which a Christian, with God's help, can achieve, or as some sort of ideal or standard or "impossible possibility." The gradations and differences are subtle and complex, but in fact most Protestants do not attempt an unmodified application of the Sermon to social and political affairs--enemies are resisted quite vigorously and often violently, for example, and prudence is given a considerable scope in social affairs--but more important, even when they hold the Sermon to be both binding upon them and practical, few Protestants have sought to use these counsels of love and nonresistance as an active and aggressive weapon to be eagerly applied to the realm of politics. In the past the Sermon, when taken seriously, worked largely to remove Christians from the realm of politics, to take them away from the sins of the world to some sort of separate and more perfect community (a withdrawal

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1. Stride Toward Freedom, p. 101.

2. Reddick, p. 15.

to the monastary, the convent, or to pacifist and separatist sects from the Anabaptists to the present). In the 1930's, to be sure, many American Protestants became pacifists and regarded their pacifism as obedience to the ethic preached in the Sermon on the Mount, but little positive action flowed from this position which, in practice, largely reduced itself to advocacy of American neutrality and isolation from the wars of Europe. When the bombs fell on Pearl Harbor most of this pacifism disappeared. But in Dr. King's case, the love ethic of Jesus expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, as applied in the manner demonstrated by Mohandas Gandi, becomes an active and effective technique of social and political reform rather than a cause of withdrawal from the world. What had so often been seen as above the realm of politics became, for Dr. King, the very essense of politics.

The counterpart of Christ's teaching of love was his attitude while dying on the Cross. It is recorded that: "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34). In a sermon titled, "Love in Action," Martin Luther King stresses the full import of that statement, and in so doing, he illustrates the attitude that the nonviolent resister seeks to emulate.

> Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them. _Then_--when he was being plunged into the abyss of nagging agony. _Then_--when man had stooped to his worst. _Then_--when he was dying, a most ignominious death. _Then_--when the wicked hands of the creature had dared to crucify the only begotten Son of the Creator. Then said Jesus, "Father, forgive them." That then might well have been otherwise. He could have said, "Father, get even with them," or "Father, let loose the mighty thunderbolts of righteous wrath and destroy them," or "Father, open the flood gates of justice and permit the staggering avalanche of retribution to pour upon them." But none of these was his response. Though subjected to inexpressible agony, suffering excruciating pain, and despired and rejected,

nevertheless, he cried, "Father, forgive them."[1]

Of Man. There is perhaps no point of Christian doctrine upon which there is a wider divergence of views than on the nature of man and his relation to God. A host of issues are involved and there have been a multitude of answers. Dr. King has dealt with the nature of man systematically, though briefly, in The Measure of a Man.[2] That work provides the framework for the following discussion.

Man, according to Dr. King, is first of all a biological being with a physical body. God created that body, hence it is not evil.[3] The Greeks, therefore, were wrong in holding that the body is evil while the soul is good, for the source of evil is not the body but the will.[4] The body, created by God, is regarded by Christians as sacred and significant, hence Christians are properly concerned with man's physical well-being. "It may be true that man cannot live by bread alone, but the mere fact that Jesus added the 'alone' means that man cannot live without bread."[5] A religion professing concern for the soul but ignoring:"...the economic conditions that damn the soul, the social conditions that corrupt men, and the city governments that cripple them, is a dry, dead, do-nothing religion in need of new blood."[6]

This concern for the physical well-being of men, derived in part from his understanding of the nature of man and his recognition that bad social conditions damn the soul as well as the body, has been a central concern of Martin Luther King's ministry. It constitutes one of his greatest departures from the prevalent type of fundamentalism which stresses individual salvation almost to the exclusion of the social well-being of man.

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[1] Strength to Love, p. 25.

[2] Another and very similar statement of Dr. King's views is contained in his sermon, "What is Man?" in Strength to Love, pp. 87-92.

[3] The Measure of a Man, p. 4. [4] Ibid., pp. 4-5. [5] Ibid., p. 5.

[6] Ibid.

Man is first a biological being, but there is more to him than that; he is also a being of spirit, a child of God.[1] This refers in part to man's rational capacity which distinguishes him from the lower animals and enables him to compose a poem, a symphony, or create a civilization.[2] It refers in part to something more, for which Dr. King gives the following illustration. "You can bring him /man/ down in his wretched old age, with his body broken down and his vision all but gone, and yet in the form of a Handel, he will look up and imagine that he hears the very angels singing, and he will come back and scratch across the pages of history a Hallelujah Chorus."[3] And Dr. King concludes: "This is what the biblical writers mean when they say that man is made in the image of God. Man has rational capacity; he has the unique ability to have fellowship with God. Man is a being of spirit."[4]

As a being of spirit, man is: ". . . different from the lower animals. He is not guided merely by instinct. He has the ability to choose between alternatives, so he can choose the good or the evil, the high or the low."[5] And man often chooses, deliberately, willfully, the evil; man is a sinner. Dr. King does not mean by this that man is completely free in his choice or rejection of evil; Dr. King is, after all, the leader of a protest aimed at the social conditions that can damn a man's soul and he heartily condemns a religion unconcerned with man's earthly condition. But Dr. King denies one of the cherished notions of modern man from Rousseau onward--that man is essentially good, that he sins only from ignorance or bad institutions, that better institutions and better education will solve the problem of evil.[1] Dr. King regards this view as a myth destroyed by the experience of this century.[2] Modern man, according to Dr. King, has been too sentimental about human nature, and:

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 8.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_., p. 9.

[4] _Ibid_., p. 10.

[5] _Ibid_.

> We have sometimes felt that progress was inevitable, and that man was gradually evolving into a higher state of perfection. But if we are honest and realistic, we must admit that it isn't like that, for man is a sinner. We take the new depth psychology, and misuse it to explain our bad deeds. We find ourselves saying that they are due to phobias, to inner conflicts. Or, in Freudian terms, we say that man's misdeeds are due to a conflict between the id and the superego.
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> But when we look at ourselves hard enough we come to see that the conflict is between God and man. . . . There is something within all of us that causes us to cry out with Augustine, "Lord, make me pure, but not yet." There is something within all of us that causes us to affirm with the apostle Paul, "The good that I would, I do not; and the evil that I would not, I do."[3]

Nor is sin only an individual matter: "When we come to our collective lives our sin is even greater. . . . See how we treat each other. Races trample over races; nations trample over nations. We go to war and destroy the values and lives that God has given us."[4]

To this point Dr. King's analysis of man's sinful nature is the traditional or orthodox Christian view and it differs radically with the optimism concerning man's essential goodness that Protestant liberalism has shared with modern secular culture. Nevertheless, there are elements in Dr. King's doctrine of man that make him fundamentally optimistic and divide him from certain traditions of the Reformation and from Protestant neo-orthodoxy as represented by Reinhold Niebuhr. These optimistic elements in King's thought derive from his view of man's relation to God. Man is a sinner in need of God's mercy. On this King, Niebuhr, and the Reformation agree. But when man repents of his sin he is not only forgiven by God's mercy, on which all agree, but he is cured of that sin by God's grace.[1] Then, with God's aid, man can rise above sin and accomplish what he knows to be good but has previously been unable to do.

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[1] Strength to Love, p. 55. [2] Ibid., p. 56.

[3] The Measure of a Man, pp. 11-12.

[4] Ibid., p. 13.

Man, according to Dr. King, has usually pursued one of two different methods of defeating evil in the world. The first is the way of the humanist who seeks by man's reason and man's efforts to conquer evil.

> But in spite of . . . astounding new scientific developments, the old evils continue and the age of reason has been transformed into an age of terror. Selfishness and hatred have not vanished with an enlargement of our educational system and an extension of our legislative policies. A once optimistic generation now asks in utter bewilderment, "Why could not we cast it /evil/ out?"
>
> The answer is rather simple: Man by his own power can never cast evil from the world. The humanist's hope is an illusion, based on too great an optimism concerning the inherent goodness of human nature.[2]

Dr. King prefers a committed humanist to an uncommitted Christian, but he notes that: ". . . so many of these dedicated persons, seeking salvation within the human context, have become understandably pessimistic and disillusioned, because their efforts are based on a kind of self-delusion which ignores fundamental facts about our mortal nature."[3]

The other method of casting out evil, equally futile to sole reliance upon man's efforts, is sole reliance upon God. "Rooted in a pessimistic doctrine of human nature, this idea, which eliminates completely the capability

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1. Stride Toward Freedom, p. 100.
2. Strength to Love, p. 120.
3. Ibid.

of sinful man to do anything, was prominent in the Reformation...but the Reformation doctrine of human nature overstressed the corruption of man."[1] And, as a result: "...Reformation theology has often emphasized a purely otherworldly religion, which stresses the utter hopelessness of this world and calls upon the individual to concentrate on preparing his soul for the world to come."[2] Dr. King regards this view as a tragic error which makes the church dangerously irrelevant.[3] Prayer alone is not sufficient to cast out evil.

> God, who gave us minds for thinking and bodies for working, would defeat his own purpose if he permitted us to obtain through prayer what may come through work and intelligence. Prayer is a marvelous and necessary supplement of our feeble efforts, but it is a dangerous substitute. When Moses strove to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land, God made it clear that he would not do for them what they could do for themselves. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."[4]

Evil will not be defeated by relying solely on either man's efforts or God's. But, "both man and God, made one in a marvelous unity of purpose through an overflowing love as the free gift of himself on the part of God and by perfect obedience and receptivity on the part of man, can transform the old into the new and drive out the deadly cancer of sin."[5] Racial justice and a world of peace of genuine possibilities, but they will come: "neither by man working alone nor by God destroying the wicked schemes of men, but when men so open their lives to God that he may fill them with love, mutual respect, understanding, and goodwill. Social salvation will come only through man's willing acceptance of God's mighty gift."[6]

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1. Ibid., p. 121. 2. Ibid. 3. Ibid., pp. 121-122.

4. Ibid., p. 122. 5. Ibid., p. 124. 6. Ibid., p. 125.

Dr. King differs with liberalism, secular and religious, in stressing the sinful nature of man. He differs with the Reformation tradition and modern neo-orthodoxy by holding that God not only forgives sin but by his grace cures it, enabling man, in co-operation with God, to defeat a very large measure of evil. Dr. King, then, is optimistic, and while he does not think that man is improving or that progress is inevitable, he does believe that by faith and hard work a large measure of justice can be achieved.

> We must be careful...not to engage in a superficial optimism or to conclude that the death of a particular evil means that all evil lies dead...All progress is precarious, and the solution of one problem brings us face to face with another problem. The Kingdom of God as a universal reality is not yet. Because sin exists on every level of man's existence, the death of one tyranny is followed by the emergence of another tyranny.
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> But just as we must avoid a superficial optimism, we must also avoid a crippling pessimism. Even though all progress is precarious, within limits real social progress may be made. Although man's moral pilgrimage may never reach a destination point on earth, his never-ceasing strivings may bring him ever closer to the city of righteousness. And though the Kingdom of God may remain not yet as a universal reality in history, in the present it may exist in such isolated forms as in judgment, in personal devotion, and in some group life. "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you."[1]

Dr. King's faith in a powerful, loving and merciful God who intervenes in history on man's behalf and cures the sickness of sin that cripples man's efforts to cast out evil, and his faith in the efficacy of the love ethic of the Sermon on the Mount as a practical guide for social and political action are the foundations of his belief in nonviolence as a way of life and a technique of social and political reform. For Dr. King, nonviolence is rooted in Christian faith.

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[1] *Ibid*., pp. 63-64.

The Philosophy of Nonviolence

The experience at Montgomery convinced Dr. King of the rightness of nonviolence as a philosophy of life and the power of nonviolence as a social technique. In the succeeding decade he applied himself effectively to both the formulation of a doctrine of nonviolence and the application of that doctrine to social conditions. His mass following, the changes in American life and government, and the Nobel Peace Prize attest to his success as both theoretician and leader of the nonviolent movement. But what does the term mean? What are the different facets of his philosophy of nonviolence? Dr. King has described nonviolence on a number of occasions. While there is no set list of points, there is, in all these descriptions, a general similarity. The following themes form the basis of his doctrine.

The Goal: Reconciliation

Nonviolence, as a movement, may have many specific ends or goals. If the movement is truly nonviolent, in spirit as well as word and deed, the goals sought will be moral ones. The thing that units nonviolent movements, despite a diversity of specific aims, is a general goal of reconciliation with the enemy, or former enemy. The object of a nonviolent movement, in this view, is not only to achieve certain gains, but to create or recreate a sense of brotherhood and community. One of the characteristics of nonviolence, according to Dr. King, is that:

> . . . it does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding. The nonviolent resister must often express his protest through noncooperation or boycotts, but he realizes that these are not ends themselves; they are merely means to awaken a sense

> of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.[1]

The nonviolent struggle may bring violent resistance to its demands, it may arouse bitterness and strife, but nonviolence itself does not add to the bitterness and make final reconciliation more difficult, as a policy of terror or violence might. Nonviolence adds nothing to the conflict that would prevent amicable relations later. A demand for justice may cause bitterness and opposition, but a demand presented nonviolently does not add to the difficulty of a settlement the hatred and need of revenge that would accompany violent means of protest.

Nonviolence Attacks Evil, Not the Evil-Doer

Characteristic of nonviolence, at least in Dr. King's formulation, is the distinction between the one who does evil and the evil done. It is the latter that must be defeated, not the former, because the object is reconciliation, not victory. Dr. King argues that:

> . . . the attack is directed against the forces of evil rather than against persons who happen to be doing the evil. It is evil that the nonviolent resister seeks to defeat, not the persons victimized by evil. If he is opposing racial injustice, the nonviolent resister has the vision to see that the basic tension is not between races.[2]

This distinction may seem to be an abstraction having little practical significance, for resistance to evil certainly entails resistance to the one who does and wills that evil,[1] but this perhaps misses the main point of Dr. King's argument, which is that the opponent or enemy, the oppressor, may be reconciled to a spirit of brotherhood by the self-sacrificing love of nonviolence. In an address he puts the matter this way:

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[1] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 102.

[2] Ibid., pp. 102-103.

> ...we must never forget that there is something within human nature that can respond to goodness, that is not totally depraved, to put it in theological terms, the image of God is never totally gone. And so the individuals who believe in this movement and who believe in nonviolence and our struggle in the South, somehow believe that even the worst segregationist can become an integrationist.[2]

The evil-doer must be resisted as well as the evil, but the distinction between the two is essential, for the object of nonviolence is to crush the evil while reconciling the opponents. The spirit of this is caught in a story told by Dr. King about Abraham Lincoln. It was at the height of the Civil War, when feeling was most bitter, yet Lincoln paused and said some kind words of the South. "Asked by a shocked bystander how he could do this, Lincoln said, 'Madam, do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?'"[3] To simply equate evil and the evil-doer makes the total destruction or subjugation of the evil-doer the cost of victory over evil. It denies the possibility of change and reconciliation. The distinction between the two, while it may seem abstract or unreal in the midst of the struggle, is of the essence of nonviolence which seeks reconciliation and brotherhood in justice as its goal and shapes its means to guard its end. A completely successful campaign of nonviolence does not destroy its opponents, it converts them.

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1. See, for example, Paul Ramsey, Christian Ethics and the Sit-In (New York: Association Press, 1961), p. 103, for a denial that Christ made this distinction and for a denial that it is possible to resist evil without resisting the evil-doer.

2. "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," p. 7.

3. Strength to Love, p. 39.

Nonviolence Is Active Resistance

Nonviolence, according to Dr. King, is an active form of resistance to evil. To call it "passive resistance," as some have, is to imply, according to Dr. King, that nonviolence is:

> ...a sort of "do-nothing method" in which the resister quietly and passively accepts evil. But nothing is further from the truth. For while the nonviolent resister is passive in the sense that he is not physically aggressive toward his opponent, his mind and emotions are always active, constantly seeking to persuade his opponent that he is wrong. The method is passive physically, but strongly active spiritually. It is not passive nonresistance to evil, it is active nonviolent resistance to evil.[1]

To the skeptic "active nonviolent resistance" is a collection of words only, a dream of the naive and tender-minded, too impractical to stand up to harsh reality. To such a critic the only practical resistance to evil is by violence. Dr. King has argued that these "tough-minded" critics are the ones who are naive and impractical:

> Angry exhortation from street corners and stirring calls for the Negro to arm and go forth to do battle stimulate loud applause. But when the applause dies, the stirred and the stirring return to their homes, and lie in their beds for still one more night with no progress in view. They cannot solve the problem they face because they have offered no challenge but only a call to arms. which they themselves are unwilling to lead, knowing that doom would be its reward.[2]

Since 1963, when Dr. King made these comments, advocates of violence have had a part in the rioting in the cities. But Dr. King still maintains that their violence has accomplished nothing of significance for Negroes,[3] hence his basic position is unaltered--it is violence, not nonviolence, that is impractical and naive.

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[1] Ibid., p. 102. [2] Why We Can't Wait, pp. 32-33.

[3] King, Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?, (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 57-58.

Proof that nonviolence is, in fact, active resistance to evil rather than passive acceptance of it is to be found in the reaction of its opponents. That reaction has been one of mobilization and counter-measures, often in the form of physical violence. The reaction is sufficient proof of the resistance. It also means, as Dr. King puts it: ". . . that nonviolent resistance is not a method for cowards; it does resist. If one uses this method because he is afraid or merely because he lacks the instruments of violence, he is not truly nonviolent."[1]

Nonviolence, then, is a method of active resistance. Proof of its resisting qualities may be found in the retaliatory pressure and violence it stimulates--acquiesence does not lead to counter-measures nor require courage of its practitioners. Proof of its practicality, at least in the American context, is found in its effective application while its critics, who advocate violence, are unable to point to significant results from their method.

The Meaning of Nonviolence

Nonviolence is a form of resistance, but it is a form requiring non-injury to those it resists.[2] Externally this entails a refusal to use arms and weapons of struggle to coerce or intimidate the opponent.[1] It is a refusal to use arson or assault, assassination or terror to impose one's will upon another. It is also, however, a refusal to use violence even in self-defense. "From the external point of view it means that the individuals involved must avoid...physical violence. So they don't have guns, they don't retaliate with physical violence. If they are hit in the process, they avoid external physical violence at every point."[2] Martin Luther King cites Gandhi on this, "Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood."[3] King continues: "The nonviolent resister is willing to accept violence if necessary, but never to inflict it. He does not seek to dodge jail. If going to jail is necessary, he enters it 'as a bridegroom enters the bride's chamber.'"[4] Externally, then, nonviolence means a refusal to use violence either offensively, to gain certain goals, or defensively, to protect oneself from violence or to retaliate for violence.

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[1] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 102.

[2] King, "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," New South, XVI (December, 1961), 5.

But there is also an internal aspect to the renunciation of violence. Violence of the spirit--hatred, envy, bitterness, rage--must also be avoided. "The nonviolent resister not only refuses to shoot his opponent but he also refuses to hate him."[5] Dr. King argues that: "...in the struggle for human dignity, the oppressed people of the world must not succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter or indulging in hate campaigns. To retaliate in kind would do nothing but intensify the existence of hate in the universe.

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1. New York Times, December 12, 1964, p. 18C.

2. "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," p. 5.

3. Stride Toward Freedom, p. 103

4. Ibid. 5. Ibid.

Along the way of life someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can only be done by projecting the ethic of love to the center of our lives."[1]

Hatred is destructive, not only to the one hated, not only to any possibility of reconciliation, but also to the one hating. Dr. King, in a sermon titled, "Loving Your Enemies," notes that hate "scars the soul and distorts the personality."[2]

> Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity. Hate destroys a man's sense of values and his objectivity. It causes him to describe the beautiful as ugly and the ugly as beautiful, and to confuse the true with the false and the false with the true.[3]

Nonviolence, as elaborated by Dr. King, entails avoidance of external physical violence in either attack or defense, but it also proscribes the internal violence of the spirit which is destructive of all concerned. Violence, in this doctrine, is not equated simply with physical aggression, nor is nonviolence equated simply with abstention from physical acts of aggression. Nonviolence is a subjective experience of the mind or soul, as well as an objective avoidance of physically destructive acts.

The Proper Relation of Ends and Means

In one perspective, nonviolence may be viewed as an answer to the question of the proper relation of ends and means. Dr. King has stated that the "first principle in the movement is the idea that means must be as pure

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1. Ibid., p. 104.

2. King, Strength to Love (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 37.

3. Ibid., p. 38.

as the end."[1] Therefore the movement of nonviolence "seeks to secure moral ends through moral means."[2] In defending this position, Dr. King argues that: "Destructive means cannot bring constructive ends, because the means represent the ideal in the making and the-end-in-progress. Immoral means cannot bring moral ends, for the ends are pre-existent in the means."[3] Expediency, then, cannot be the sole test of proper techniques of protest because the use of immoral or destructive means will corrupt the end being sought. To abandon moral means is to abandon, knowingly or unknowingly, the final moral end.

The condemnation of the use of immoral means to obtain moral ends is always made by Dr. King in the context of a choice between violence and nonviolence as a means of social action. The obligation to use moral means becomes a defense of the use of nonviolence. Implicit in the argument is the assumption that the use of violence is necessarily immoral, hence the choice of violent means is the choice of immoral means. Curiously, Dr. King's acceptance of the use of federal force and, potentially, federal violence to enforce desegregation at Little Rock and at the University of Mississippi either contradicts his stated position on ends and means or deprives that position of its clarity and usefulness. If violence is sometimes acceptable, then it is not in itself immoral, or moral ends sometimes justify the use of immoral (violent) means.

Occasionally the distinction between moral and immoral means is made

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1. "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," p. 4.

2. New York Times, December 12, 1964, p. 18C

3. "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," p. 116.

in terms of a distinction between physical force and soul force. Dr. King does not elaborate, but the contrast is made frequently, and always in favor of soul force. Thus, Dr. King recalls that in his weekly remarks as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association he said: "We must meet the forces of hate with the power of love; we must meet physical force with soul force."[1] The reason for Dr. King's repeated use of this contrast between physical force and soul force is unclear. It is usually apparent from his remarks that there can be no clear division between physical force as evil and soul force as good; indeed, in the cited statement the same sentence that contrasts physical and soul force clearly indicates that physical force is a manifestation of hatred, a force of the soul.

The forces of the soul can be both good and evil by Dr. King's own account, therefore the contrast between physical force and soul force is apparently not a rigid dichotomy between evil and good, but is instead a shorthand way of arguing for meeting hate-inspired physical violence with nonviolent love. It may be noted in this context that Dr. King emphatically condemns nonviolent methods if used to obtain immoral ends. Replying to the clergymen who praised the Birmingham police for avoiding physical violence, Dr. King said:

> ...I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Perhaps Mr. Connor and his policemen have been rather nonviolent in public, as was Chief Pritchett in Albany, Georgia, but they have used the moral means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of racial injustice. As T. S. Eliot has said: "The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right

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[1] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 87.

deed for the wrong reason."[1]

In sum, one of the fundamental principles of nonviolence is that moral ends must be pursued by moral means. To do otherwise will corrupt the end sought. Violence, in this view, is necessarily immoral, hence must be avoided, while nonviolence is moral as long as it is used to obtain just ends.

Noncooperation With Evil

A persistent theme in Dr. King's doctrine of nonviolence is that people have a moral obligation to protest against evil. This obligation may entail a withdrawal of cooperation from an evil system. Speaking of the plight of the Negro in the United States, Dr. King argues:

> To accept passively an unjust system is to cooperate with that system; thereby the oppressed become as evil as the oppressor. Noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. The oppressed must never allow the conscience of the oppressor to slumber. Religion reminds every man that he is his brother's keeper. To accept injustice or segregation passively is to say to the oppresor that his actions are morally right. It is a way of allowing his conscience to fall asleep. At this moment the oppressed fails to be his brother's keeper. So acquiescence--while often the easier way--is not the moral way. It is the way of the coward. The Negro cannot win the respect of his oppressor by acquiescing; he merely increases the oppressor's arrogance and contempt. Acquiescence is interpreted as proof of the Negro's inferiority. The Negro cannot win the respect of the white people of the South or the peoples of the world if he is willing to sell the future of his children for his personal and immediate comfort and safety.[2]

When challenged by the similarity of the bus boycott in Montgomery to the economic boycotts by the White Citizens Councils, Dr. King had noted

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1. Why We Can't Wait, p. 99.

2. Stride Toward Freedom, p. 212.

that the purpose of the boycotts by the Citizens Councils was to perpetuate an injustice, segregation, and to destroy its opponents. Dr. King, thinking of Thoreau's _Essay on Civil Disobedience_, had seen the Negro's efforts not as a boycott designed to destroy, but as a refusal to "lend our cooperation to an evil system."[1] "The bus company, being an external expression of the system, would naturally suffer, but the basic aim was to refuse to cooperate with evil."[2] The rationale was as follows:

> "He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetuate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it." When oppressed people willingly accept their oppression they only serve to give the oppressor a convenient justification for his acts. Often the oppressor goes along unaware of the evil involved in his oppression so long as the oppressed accepts it. So in order to be true to one's conscience and true to God, a righteous man has no alternative but to refuse to cooperate with an evil system.[3]

Civil Disobedience

A consistent refusal to cooperate with evil may entail disobedience to laws if those laws seek to enforce injustice. One of the most controversial aspects of the nonviolent movement has been its willingness to break certain laws while demanding the strict enforcement of others. The critics of the nonviolent movement have argued that no one has a right to break the law and that the nonviolent movement cannot consistently break the law while urging its enforcement on others. The problem of obedience or disobedience to law has faced the Negro protest movement both when the laws themselves support a form of injustice, such as segregation, and when the laws, or court injunctions, are used to stifle Negro protest. Dr. King's first direct challenge to the law came in the form of disobedience to a court injunction in Birmingham directing him and his movement to cease their activities.[1] Dr. King recalls that:

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 15.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_.

> When the injunction was issued in Birmingham, our failure to obey it bewildered our opponents. They did not know what to do. We did not hide our intentions. In fact, I announced our plan to the press, pointing out that we were not anarchists advocating lawlessness, but that it was obvious to us that the courts of Alabama had misused the judicial process in order to perpetuate injustice and segregation. Consequently, we could not, in good conscience, obey their findings.[2]

The most detailed defense of civil disobedience by Dr. King came from his pen while he was in jail in Birmingham. It is titled, logically, "Letter From Birmingham Jail."[3] In this letter Dr. King explains why some laws are to be obeyed while others are not.

> The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."[4]

But how is a just law defined? What makes a law just? Dr. King explains that:

> A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law.[5]

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[1] _Why We Can't Wait_, p. 68.

[2] _Ibid_., p. 69.

[3] The letter was written in reply to a statement critical of King's actions published by eight prominent clergymen (listed in _Why We Can't Wait_, pp. 77-78). The version of King's reply cited here--that contained in _Why We Can't Wait_, pp. 77-100--has been "polished" for publication. Substantially the same defense of civil disobedience was made in his 1961 article, "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," to justify the actions of the student nonviolent movement.

[4] _Why We Can't Wait_, p. 84.

[5] _Ibid_., p. 85

Here Dr. King is invoking a concept, natural law, that is rejected by many Protestants and nonreligious. He offers a further test, the effect of the law on human personality.

> Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I-it" relationship for an "I-thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things.[1]

As Dr. King has admitted, the concepts of natural law, moral law, and actions degrading to human personality are vague and abstract to many people. They are an insufficient guide to the justness of a law.[2] For these people Dr. King offers a "more concrete" series of tests that are primarily procedural. Thus: "An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is a difference made legal."[3]

Law must be equal in application and protection. It must also have the consent of the governed. "A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law."[4] By this test those of the society who are denied a voice in making the laws are absolved of the obligation of obeying them. A government and its laws only have a legitimate claim to obedience if they are based upon consent.

Finally, to be binding, a law must be just in its application as well

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1. Ibid.

2. "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," p. 7.

3. Why We Can't Wait, p. 85. 4. Ibid., pp. 85-86.

as just on its face. Laws or ordinances such as those requiring parade permits are to be obeyed only if they are not used in fact to deny the right of protest as guaranteed under the First Amendment.[1]

To those who argue that, these tests notwithstanding, the only true law is positive man-made law and that the laws of a nation must be in all cases obeyed until changed, Dr. King replies: "We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal'. It was 'illegal' to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany."[2] It was illegal in America for abolitionists not to return run-away slaves; it is illegal to protect the basic human dignity and rights of blacks in South Africa.[3]

Dr. King does not regard his counsels as tending toward anarchy or disrespect for law as an institution. In fact, he holds that, unlike the segregationists who violate the law, the nonviolent movement has shown a profound respect for law. He says:

> In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.[4]

Not every Negro has voluntarily accepted a jail sentence to protest an unjust law, even when he has in fact violated the law, but on many occasions Negroes and their white sympathizers have gone willingly to jail to protest an unjust law, and on occasions they have more than filled the jails. Very few segregationists have willingly gone to jail for their violations of the law.

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[1] Ibid., p. 86. [2] Ibid., p. 87.

[3] "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," pp. 8-9.

[4] Why We Can't Wait, p. 86.

Nor is civil disobedience without honorable precedent. Dr. King notes that it was practiced by the Jews Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego against the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, by the Greek, Socrates, against the laws of his native Athens, by the early Christians against the Roman Empire, as well as by the American abolitionists, Hungarian freedom fighters, those who protected the Jews against Nazi Germany and Chief Luthuli and others who have defied apartheid laws in South Africa.[1]

Finally, one must never overlook the purpose of law as an institution. According to Dr. King, "law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and...when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress."[2]

Civil disobedience is a necessary consequence of the obligation to refuse to cooperate with evil. If the laws violated are unjust in intent or application, by the standards of moral law or rational and fair procedure, then they are to be disobeyed openly and their penalties are to be accepted voluntarily as an act of conscience and an appeal to the community. Disobedience of this kind is held to respect the institution of the law and to avoid a tendency to anarchy.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 86-87, and "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," p. 8.

[2] Why We Can't Wait, p. 88.

Suffering

The nonviolence movement emphasizes the importance of suffering in any attempt at social reform or regeneration. In this the movement is one with violent protest, as Dr. King has observed:

> ...both violence and non-violence agree that suffering can be a very powerful social force. But there is this difference: violence says that suffering can be a powerful social force by inflicting the suffering on somebody else; so this is what we do in war, this is what we do in the whole violent thrust of the violent movement...The non-violent say that suffering becomes a powerful social force when you willingly accept that violence on yourself, so that self-suffering stands at the center of the non-violent movement...[1]

The voluntary acceptance of unearned suffering is creative in at least two respects. It is, first of all, quite persuasive. People who are willing to suffer for an idea or cause demonstrate the importance of that idea or cause in a way that merely rational argument will not. Dr. King stresses this aspect of suffering and relies upon the testimony of M. K. Gandhi.

> Suffering,the nonviolent resister realizes, has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities. "Things of fundamental importance to people are not secured by reason alone, but have to be purchased with their suffering," said Gandhi. He continues: "Suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears which are otherwise shut to the voice of reason."[2]

In one of his sermons, "Loving Your Enemies," Dr. King graphically describes what is required of a nonviolent resister and what he may hope to accomplish:

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[1] "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," p. 6.

[2] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 103.

> To our most bitter opponents we say: We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws, because noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. Throw us in jail, and we shall still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and we shall still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our community at the midnight hour and beat us and leave us half dead, and we shall still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. One day we shall win freedom, but not only for ourselves. We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory.[1]

Voluntary acceptance of unearned suffering has an internal effect also. It builds self-respect and dignity and it heals old psychological wounds. It is a method of transforming bitterness into creative action and redemptive love.[2] Indeed, to "suffer in a righteous cause is to grow to our humanity's full stature.[3] And finally, there is the Christian understanding of suffering. By this understanding suffering may be necessary because: "The end of life is not to be happy nor to achieve pleasure and avoid pain, but to do the will of God, come what may."[4] Dr. King rephrases this in another sermon:

> ...we are gravely mistaken to think that Christianity protects us from the pains and agony of mortal existence. Christianity has always insisted that the cross we bear precede the crown we wear. To be a Christian, one must take up his cross, with all its difficulties and agonizing and tragedy-packed content, and carry it until that very cross leaves its marks upon us and redeems us to that more excellent way which comes only through suffering.[5]

Suffering, then, serves two functions. It transforms the society outside by its persuasive qualities and it transforms and heals the man within by its redemptive qualities. Self-sacrificing suffering not only builds a better society, it makes better men of those who employ it.

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1. Strength to Love, p. 40. 2. Stride Toward Freedom, p. 220.

3. Ibid. 4. Strength to Love, p. 132. 5. Ibid., p. 14.

Love of the Oppressor

The underlying premise or core of nonviolence, as understood by Dr. King, is love--love even of the oppressor. No one can say that this is an easy doctrine and many in the Negro community have rejected it. Malcolm X, for example, typified the reaction of the black nationalist when he said:

> Most of the Negroes you see running around here talking about "love everybody"--they don't have any love whatsoever for their own kind. When they say, "Love everybody," what they are doing is setting up a situation for us to love white people.[1]
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> . . . .
>
> _White_ people follow King. _White_ people pay King. _White_ people subsidize King. _White_ people support King. But the masses of black people don't support Martin Luther King. King is the best weapon that the white man, who wants to brutalize Negroes, has ever gotten in this country, because he is setting up a situation where, when the white man wants to attack Negroes, they can't defend themselves. . . .[2]

To a black nationalist such as the late Malcolm X, the philosophy of loving the oppressor is a misguided piece of advice seized upon by the white controlled mass media to disarm the Negroes and make them easy prey to the white man. Dr. King and his followers are instruments of white oppression.

Black nationalists are not alone in their rejection of a philosophy of love of the oppressor. Dr. Kenneth Clark, a highly respected Negro psychologist cited in the 1954 school desegregation case by Chief Justice Earl Warren on the harmful effects of segregation upon Negro children, has made the following criticisms:

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[1] Kenneth B. Clark, _The Negro Protest: James Baldwin, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Talk with Kenneth B. Clark_ (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 25-26.

[2] _Ibid_., pp. 26-27.

> On the surface, King's philosophy appears to reflect health and stability, while the Black Nationalists betray pathology and instability. A deeper analysis, however, might reveal an unrealistic, if not pathological, basis in King's doctrine as well. It is questionable whether the masses of an oppressed group can in fact "love" their oppressor. The natural reactions to injustice, oppression and humiliation are bitterness and resentment. It would appear, then, that the demand that a victim love his oppressor--in contrast with a mere tactical application of nonviolent, dignified resistance as a moral rebuke with concomitant power to arouse the conscience and effectiveness of others--imposes an additional and probably intolerable psychological burden.[1]

Nor would Dr. Clark disagree entirely with the black nationalists with regard to white attitudes toward Dr. King's philosophy.

> King is more immune from criticism among whites than among Negroes, for to whites his leadership, reinforced strongly by the award of the Nobel Peace Prize, personifies quiet intelligence, gentlemanly conduct, the Christian philosophy of love and disciplined nonviolent protest, which on its face is less threatening and more acceptable than are other civil rights strategies. Although King does not intend it, his approach is, to whites, not inconsistent with the familiar view of Negroes as long-suffering and amenable.[2]

But neither all Negro intellectuals nor all followers of Dr. King would accept these negative critiques of the philosophy of nonviolence and love of the oppressor. Ralph Ellison, author of Invisible Man, notes that:

> Martin Luther King isn't working out of yesterday nor the day before yesterday. He is working out of a long history of Negro tradition and wisdom, and he certainly knows more about the psychology of his followers than Dr. Clark. He knows that these people have been conditioned to contain not only the physical pressures involved in their struggle, but that they are capable, through this same tradition, of mastering the psychological pressures of which Clark speaks.[3]

Negroes differ on both the possibility and the desirability of love of the oppressor. Dr. King has been fully aware of the critical attitudes toward this doctrine, hence he has explained his position at some length. His defense rests, first of all, on a distinction between three different types of love. As he puts it:

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[1] Kenneth B. Clark, Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 218.

[2] Ibid., pp. 183.

[3] Quoted in Robert Penn Warren, Who Speaks for the Negro? (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 341.

> In speaking of love at this point, we are not referring to some sentimental or affectionate emotion. It would be nonsense to urge men to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense. Love in this connection means understanding, redemptive good will. Here the Greek language comes to our aid. There are three words for love in the Greek New Testament. First, there is *eros*. In Platonic philosophy *eros* meant the yearning of the soul for the realm of the divine. It has now come to mean a sort of aesthetic or romantic love. Second, there is *philia* which means intimate affection between personal friends. *Philia* denotes a sort of reciprocal love; the person loves because he is loved. When we speak of loving those who oppose us, we refer to neither *eros* or *philia*; we speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word *agape*. *Agape* means understanding, redeeming good will for all men. It is an overflowing love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless, creative. It is not set in motion by any quality or function of its object. It is the love of God operating in the human heart.[1]

On another occasion Dr. King defined *agape* in this manner.

> *Agape* is more than romantic love, *agape* is more than friendship. *Agape* is understanding, creative, redemptive, good will to all men. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. Theologians would say that it is the love of God operating in the human heart. So that when one rises to love on this level, he loves men not because he likes them, not because their ways appeal to him, but he loves every man because God loves him. And he rises to the point of loving the person who does an evil deed while hating the deed that the person does. I think this is what Jesus meant when he said "love your enemies." I'm very happy he didn't say like your enemies, because it is pretty difficult to like some people...Love is understanding, redemptive, creative, good will for all men.[2]

A person can hardly like any man who bombs his home, but he may have an understanding of the motivations of such a man and of the indirect causes of such actions. He may genuinely desire that such a man be freed from the hatred and misconceptions leading to the bombing. He may genuinely seek reconciliation with that man or men like him. Ralph Ellison explains this, in part, by mentioning occasions when whites, bent on violence, had tried to provoke him, but had failed because he had refused to be provoked: "This guy wants me to fight, most likely he wants an excuse to kill me--what do I have to gain? And am I going to let him impose his values upon my life?"[1] Ralph Ellison then notes:

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[1] *Stride Toward Freedom*, p. 104.

[2] "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," p. 6.

> So, Dr. Clark notwithstanding, if I couldn't love my would-be provocateur as Dr. King advises, I could dismiss him as childish and, perhaps even forgive him. This, even though at the time I ached to meet him on neutral ground and on equal terms.
>
> One thing that Dr. Clark overlooks is that Southern Negroes learned about violence in a very tough school. They have known for a long time that they can take a lot of headwhipping and survive and go on working toward their own goals. We learned about forbearance and forgiveness in that same school, and about hope too. So today we sacrifice, as we sacrificed yesterday, the pleasure of personal retaliation in the interest of the common good.[2]

Agape, according to Dr. King, is a concern for others which "discovers the neighbor in every man it meets."[3] Therefore, there is no distinction between friend and enemy for both are the object of concern.[4] In fact, it is precisely when friendship, on the basis of liking, is impossible that agape is most necessary. Dr. King remarks:

> St. Paul assures us that the loving act of redemption was done "while we were yet sinners"--that is, at the point of our greatest need for love. Since the white man's personality is greatly distorted by segregation, and his soul is greatly scarred, he needs the love of the Negro. The Negro must love the white man, because the white man needs his love to remove his tensions, insecurities, and fears.[5]

In having redemptive good will for both enemy and friend the nonviolent resister expresses another aspect of agape, the "recognition of the fact that all life is interrelated. All humanity is involved in a single process,

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1. Warren, p. 342. 2. Ibid.

3. Stride Toward Freedom, p. 105. 4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

and all men are brothers. To the degree that I harm my brother, no matter what he is doing to me, to that extent I am harming myself."[1] This may seem quite unreal to many but Dr. King gives two examples to show that it is meaningful: One example is that of education. To preserve a system of segregation that depersonalizes and degrades the Negro, white men have consistently voted against federal aid to education. The result has been poorer education for both black and white.[2] On another level, the entire system of segregation is built upon the degradation of the Negro, but that degradation is purchased at a terrible cost to the white man who, in preserving a caste system, degrades his system of justice, his ethics, his press, even his philosophy and religion.[3] The consequences of denying another's humanity can be terrible indeed, as has been amply illustrated in Mississippi: The Closed Society, by a former Professor of History at the University of Mississippi, Dr. James W. Silver.[4]

Dr. King adds to his definition of agape this:

> Agape is not weak, passive love. It is love in action. Agape is love seeking to preserve and create community. It is insistence on community even when one seeks to break it. Agape is a willingness to sacrifice in the interest of mutuality. Agape is a willingness to go to any length to restore community. It doesn't stop at the first mile, but it goes the second mile to restore community. It is a willingness to forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven to restore community.[5]

To love, in the sense described by Dr. King, is to resist injustice while seeking to establish a sense of community with all men, including opponents.[6] It requires redemptive good will and understanding, even toward ones who persecute you. Robert Penn Warren, discussing the riots in Harlem, relates an incident that conveys to whites the hardness of the doctrine:

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[1] Ibid., p. 106. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

[4] James W. Silver, Mississippi: The Closed Society (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964).

[5] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 105. [6] Ibid., p. 106.

> Some time ago, before the riots, in a conversation, William Stringfellow, the author of My People Is The Enemy, graduate of the Harvard Law School, Episcopal layman, seven-year resident of Harlem in what the Times has called the worst block in New York, predicted to me such riots, and said that the duty of a white man, confronting a Negro mob, is to accept his fate without resistance. The white man, he said, could at least offer his Christian testimony.[1]

To do less than that is to do less than some Negroes and whites have done already, and to do less than what has been asked of demonstrators all over the nation.

The source of this demanding doctrine of love is, for Dr. King, the teachings of Jesus. It is succinctly put in Matthew 5:43-45:

> Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven.[2]

Dr. King has based a sermon on this passage entitled "Loving Your Enemies."[3] In it he describes both how and why one should love his enemy. The first necessity, if one is to love his enemy, is to develop the ability to forgive. "It is impossible even to begin the act of loving one's enemies without the prior acceptance of the necessity, over and over again, of forgiving those who inflict evil and injury on us."[4] The victim must initiate the act of forgiving, it cannot be initiated by the wrongdoer. To forgive

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1. Warren, pp. 180-81.

2. Dr. KIng makes this statement the center of a strategy for political action.

3. Published in Strength to Love, pp. 34-41.

4. Ibid., p. 35.

is neither to ignore what has gone before, for that would be neither possible nor desirable, nor to cancel a debt only, thereafter having nothing more to do with the one forgiven. To forgive is to remember what has gone before, but to remove it as a stumbling block to further relations. To forgive is to lay the basis for reconciliation and involvement.[1]

A second necessity, if one is to love his enemy, is the recognition that the evil he has done does not express the whole of his nature. Dr. King argues that: "...there is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies."[2] Knowing this, when we face our "enemy-neighbor," "We recognize that his hate grows out of fear, pride, ignorance, prejudice, and misunderstanding, but in spite of this, we know God's image is ineffably etched in his being."[3] The enemy, who is also our neighbor, may be loved when we realize that he, like us, is tragically divided, both good and bad, and that he is never beyond the possibility of redemption.

A final requirement of love is to relinquish the desire to defeat or humiliate the opponent. We are, according to Dr. King, at times able to humble our worst enemy: "Inevitably, his weak moments come and we are able to thrust in his side the spear of defeat. But this we must not do. Every word and deed must contribute to an understanding with the enemy and release those vast reservoirs of good-will which have been blocked by impenetrable walls of hate."[4]

If a person would know how to love, he must develop the capacity to forgive his enemies, he must realize that the enemy is not wholly evil but is divided within as indeed we all are, and he must avoid the temptation of

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1. *Ibid*. 2. *Ibid*., p. 36. 3. *Ibid*. 4. *Ibid*.

crushing and humiliating the opponent when finally that opportunity comes. On this basis friendship and reconciliation become possible.

But why should a person seek to love his enemies? First, according to Dr. King, because only by loving the enemy can the endless chain of hatred be broken.

> Returning hate for hate multiplies hate...Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction...The chain reaction of evil---hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars---must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.[1]

Love of the enemy is necessary for individual psychological health as well as group survival. Hatred can not only result in destruction of others --it killed six million Jews in Hitler's Europe--but it can also cripple the one who hates. Hate corrodes the hater's personality and destroys his objectivity. It causes him to react irrationally.[2] In this, Dr. King perceives a consensus in the wisdom of old and the teachings of modern psychology.

> Psychiatrists report that many of the strange things that happen in the subconscious, many of our inner conflicts, are rooted in hate. They say, "Love or perish." Modern psychology recognizes what Jesus taught centuries ago: hate divides the personality and love in an amazing and inexorable way unites it.[3]

Moreover, only love can transform an enemy into a friend. "We never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate; we get rid of an enemy by getting rid of enmity. By its very nature, love creates and builds up. Love transforms with redemptive power."[4] Only love can lead to reconciliation and restoration of the community.

The final reason given for loving the enemy, and for Dr. King the ultimate reason, is that we are commanded to do so by Jesus. "'Love your enemies...that ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven'."[1] Only through love does our status as potential sons of God become actuality. Only by loving our enemies do we come to know God and experience his holiness.[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 37. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 38. [4] *Ibid.*

Love, then, is understanding, redemptive good will for all men. It requires the ability to forgive the enemy, to avoid the natural desire to humiliate him, and to understand the enemy is not completely evil, that he has the capacity for change and redemption, and that the victim is not completely without evil, that he too requires forgiveness. Love is necessary in order to break the chain of hatred that threatens even our survival, it is necessary for reconciliation with our enemies, it is necessary for internal harmony and psychological health, and it is necessary to complete our potential relation with God as his children.

Faith in the Future--Optimism and Hope

Nonviolence requires an optimistic and hopeful attitude toward the future. This optimism is based on the assumption that just goals will be achieved. This assumption, in turn, is based upon a faith that the universe is on the side of truth and justice, and that, as a consequence, justice must prevail. Dr. King thinks that the theme song of the student movement, "We Shall Overcome," catches this spirit. He cites its verses, "We shall overcome, deep in my heart I do believe, we shall overcome," and "we are not afraid, we are not afraid today, deep in my heart I do believe, we shall overcome." and recalls that after an all night session with students about to leave on "freedom rides" to Mississippi they sang those verses.

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[1] Ibid., p. 39.

[2] Ibid.

> ...we all joined hands and started singing together. "We shall overcome, we shall overcome". And something within me said, now how is it that these students can sing this, they are going down to Mississippi, they are going to face hostile and jeering mobs, and yet they could sing, "We shall overcome." They may even face physical death, and yet they could sing, "We shall overcome." Most of them realized that they would be thrown into jail, and yet they could sing, "We shall overcome, we are not afraid." Then something caused me to see at that moment the real meaning of the movement. That students had faith in the future. That the movement was based on hope, that this movement had something within it that says somehow even though the arc of the moral universe is long, it bends toward justice.[1]

Dr. King makes it clear that this faith in the future impels the entire nonviolent movement, not only the student movement. In Stride Toward Freedom he states:

> A...basic fact about nonviolent resistance is that it is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. Consequently, the believer in nonviolence has a deep faith in the future. This faith is another reason why the nonviolent resister can accept suffering without retaliation. For he knows that in his struggle for justice he has cosmic companionship. It is true that there are devout believers in nonviolence who find it difficult to believe in a personal God. But even these persons believe in the existence of some creative force that works for universal wholeness. Whether we call it an unconscious process, an impersonal Brahman, or a Personal Being of matchless power and infinite love, there is a creative force in this universe that works to bring the disconnected aspects of reality into a harmonious whole.[2]

Nonviolence is a method of resistance relying on the weapon of love. It avoids both external physical violence of the spirit while insisting that the means used to obtain a goal must be as pure as the goal itself. This doctrine recognizes a moral obligation to refuse cooperation with injustice, even if that refusal entails disobedience to the law. Such disobedience involves no disrespect for law as an institution as the penalty for its viola-

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1. "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," p. 10.

2. Stride Toward Freedom, pp. 106-107.

tion is voluntarily and publicly accepted. The goal of nonviolence is always reconciliation with the opponents, hence the protest is directed at the evil itself, not the one who does the evil. Reconciliation is made possible by love of the oppressor and by the voluntary acceptance of suffering. Finally, physical danger and death are often the consequences of nonviolence for the one employing it, but the risk is made acceptable by a confident belief that the sacrifice will not be in vain. This belief rests on the faith that the universe is on the side of justice and that right will eventually prevail.

The Role and Functions of Nonviolence

The doctrine of nonviolence preached and taught by Martin Luther King is a doctrine of love and brotherhood, suffering and reconciliation. But it is likely that neither the enemies nor the more perceptive friends of that doctrine would accept the theological and rhetorical descriptions of it as a complete and sufficient explanation of its rapid acceptance and at times spectacular success. Dr. King himself, though he accepts nonviolence as a peculiarly Christian method of acting in the political realm and regards it as binding upon him, goes beyond ethical and theological analysis in explaining the role and functions of nonviolence. His analysis begins with the argument that the nation is engaged in a social revolution.

1963--A Year of Revolution

The summer of 1963 was marked by widespread and militant nonviolent protest. Dr. King states that this was in fact a "Negro revolution" and he describes it as follows:

> For the first time in the long and turbulent history of the nation, almost one thousand cities were engulfed in civil turmoil, with violence trembling just below the surface. Reminiscent of the French Revolution of 1789, the streets had become a battle ground, just as they had become the battle ground in the 1830's, of England's tumultuous Chartist movement. As in these two revolutions, a submerged social group, propelled by a burning need for justice, lifting itself with sudden swiftness, moving with determination and a majestic scorn for risk and danger, created an uprising so powerful that it shook a huge society from its comfortable base.[1]

But the injustices which brought this revolution, if such it may be described, had existed as long as the Republic had existed. Why then did this revolt occur in the year 1963? Dr. King argues that the timing of the revolution was determined by a combination of two factors: first, an intense dissatisfaction on the part of colored citizens, and second, the acceptance, by these citizens, of an adequate technique of protest--mass nonviolent demonstrations. Dr. King argues that neither factor, alone, would have produced a social revolution.[2]

The intense Negro dissatisfaction that was the basis of the revolt derived from a number of factors, according to Dr. King. The slow pace of school desegregation in the South after the 1954 Supreme Court decision was one factor.[3] A decade of desegregation with "all deliberate speed" had left more than ninety per cent of the Negro children in the South in entirely segregated schools. In most areas of the South more than ninety-eight per cent of the Negro children were attending segregated and inferior schools.[4] Dr. King argues that this long delay, itself a mockery of the law, condemned

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1. Why We Can't Wait, p. 2.

2. Ibid., pp. 13-14. 3. Ibid., p. 5. 4. Ibid., p. 6.

yet another generation of Negroes to compete for jobs with an inferior education.[1]

The political parties were another source of Negro dissatisfaction. Each had pledged change at the 1960 conventions, but neither, in Negroes opinion, had fulfilled those pledges.[2] John F. Kennedy had attracted attention during the presidential campaign by his statements that discrimination in housing could be ended "with the stroke of a pen." He failed to make that stroke for two years and even when it came it failed to accomplish its promise.[3] Dr. King refers to the national political leadership's policies as "tokenism" and summarizes the Negro reaction as follows: "The Negro felt that he recognized the same old bone that had been tossed to him in the past --only now it was being handed to him on a platter, with courtesy.[4]

International events provided a third impetus to domestic revolt, according to Dr. King. Negroes, he argues, contrasted America's actions and words abroad with its actions at home and found a large measure of hypocrisy in the difference.

> Throughout the upheavals of coldwar politics, Negroes had seen their government go to the brink of nuclear conflict more than once. The justification for risking the annihilation of the human race was always expressed in terms of America's willingness to go to any lengths to pre-

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[1] Dr. King refuses to blame the slow pace of school desegregation entirely on the segregationists of the South. He argues that the Supreme Court's acceptance of the legality of the Pupil Placement Law "was almost as far-reaching in modifying and limiting the integration of schools as the original decision had been in attempting to eliminate segregation. Without technically reversing itself, the Court had granted legal sanction to tokenism..." _Ibid_.

[2] _Ibid_., pp. 6-7.

[3] _Ibid_., p. 7. See Dr. King's assessment in "Fumbling on the New Frontier," _The Nation_, 194 (March 3, 1962), 190-193.

[4] _Why We Can't Wait_, p. 7.

> serve freedom. To the Negro that readiness for heroic measures in the defense of liberty disappeared or became tragically weak when the threat was within our own borders and was concerned with the Negro's liberty.[1]

An additional contrast with the situation at home was provided by the decolonization and liberation of nations in Africa. Dr. King notes that black statesmen voted in the United Nations in New York while Negro citizens were denied the vote in some areas of this nation. More than thirty-four African nations moved from colonial bondage to independence while American Negroes moved "from small ghettos to larger ones."[2]

> Witnessing the drama of Negro progress elsewhere in the world, witnessing a level of conspicuous consumption at home exceeding anything in our history, it was natural that by 1963 Negroes would rise with resolution and demand a share of governing power, and living conditions measured by American standards rather than by the standards of colonial impoverishment.[3]

The Negro plight was further dramatized by the approaching one-hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Plans were made to celebrate that anniversary, "But alas! All the talk and publicity accompanying the centennial only served to remind the Negro that he still wasn't free..."[4] The Negro, one hundred years after emancipation, still faced open discrimination in the South and subtle discrimination elsewhere. He was still at the bottom of the economic ladder. Negroes:

> ...live within two concentric circles of segregation. One imprisons them on the basis of color, while the other confines them within a separate culture of poverty. The average Negro is born into want and deprivation. His struggle to escape his circumstances is hindered by color discrimination. He is deprived of normal education and normal social and economic opportunities. When he seeks opportunity, he is told, in effect, to lift himself by his own bootstraps, advice which does not take into account the fact that he is barefoot.[5]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 8-9. [2] Ibid., p. 10. [3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 10-11. [5] Ibid.

After one hundred years, Negroes were still "last to be hired, first to be fired." Their median income was one-half that of the white man.[1] Two and one-half times as many Negroes as whites were unemployed.[2] Negroes were concentrated in those jobs most threatened by automation and denied jobs in the vast public construction works for which they paid taxes but could not draw paychecks.[3]

For the Negro citizen the cumulative effect of all these factors was an intense dissatisfaction with its position in society. But that dissatisfaction with his state was neither a new attitude on the part of the Negro, nor a sufficient explanation of his dramatic protests in 1963, according to Dr. King.

The Myth of Negro Patience

> It is important to understand, first of all, that the Revolution is not indicative of a sudden loss of patience within the Negro. The Negro had never really been patient in the pure sense of the word. The posture of silent waiting was forced upon him psychologically because he was shackled physically.[4]

Dr. King argues that before emancipation the Negro was suppressed by sheer physical force.

> He was forbidden to associate with other Negroes living on the same plantation, except when weddings or funerals took place. Punishment for any form of resistance or complaint about his condition could range from mutilation to death. Families were torn apart, friends separated,

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 11

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

> cooperation to improve their condition carefully thwarted. Fathers and mothers were sold from their children and children were bargained away from their parents. Young girls were, in many cases, sold to become the breeders of fresh generations of slaves. The slaveholders of America had devised with almost scientific precision their systems for keeping the Negro defenseless, emotionally and physically.[1]

The end of slavery did not produce equality for the Negro. Some of the barriers to Negro progress were carryovers from the slave era: the fear of physical violence by white mobs or white police, the fear of economic reprisal in the form of loss of job or credit, the denial of any voice in the government by denial of the vote, the denial of the means to compete with the white man by the denial of an adequate and equal education. Dr. King does not dwell at length on the post-emancipation techniques of suppression. He does add that:

> ...one of the revelations during the past few years is the fact that the straitjackets of race prejudice and discrimination do not wear only Southern labels. The subtle, psychological technique of the North has approached in its ugliness and victimization the outright terror and open brutality of the South. The result has been a demeanor that passed for patience in the eyes of the white man, but covered a powerful impatience in the heart of the Negro.[2]

A New Burden: Tokenism

A number of events raised Negro hopes in the decades prior to 1963. Legal attacks on the segregated educational system culminated in the 1954 Supreme Court decision holding segregated schools to be inherently unequal and therefore unconstitutional. A civil rights bill passed Congress and more Negroes were appointed to high office. The armed forces were desegregated by executive order. Nevertheless, Negro resentment grew. It grew, according to

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[1] Ibid., p. 16. [2] Ibid.

Dr. King, because Negroes came to believe that the true coin of racial progress was being replaced by the counterfeit coin of tokenism:

> The Negro wanted to feel pride in his race? With tokenism, the solution was simple. If all twenty million Negroes would keep looking at Ralph Bunche, the one man is so exalted a post would generate such a volume of pride that it could be cut into portions and served to everyone. A judge here and a judge there; an executive behind a polished desk in a carpeted office; a high government administrator with a toehold on a cabinet post; one student in a Mississippi university lofted there by an army; three Negro children admitted to the whole high school system of a major city--all these were tokens used to obscure the persisting reality of segregation and discrimination.
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> For a decade the hard struggles had culminated in limited gains, which, if they advanced at all, crawled sluggishly forward. Schools, jobs, housing, voting rights and political positions--in each of these areas, manipulation with tokenism was the rule. Negroes had begun to feel that a policy was crystallizing, that all their struggles had brought them merely to a new level in which a selected few would become educated, honored and integrated to represent and substitute for the many.[1]

Dr. King says that he accepts the necessity of small beginnings.[2] His objection to the nation's performance in the period from 1954 to 1963 is based on his understanding of it as a period of false beginnings, unfulfilled promises. He argues that the white majority attempted to satisfy the Negro with partial equality--an equality given to a privileged few. He argues that there is a difference between a modest beginning and tokenism. "The tokenism Negroes condemn is recognizable because it is an end in itself. Its purpose is not to begin a process, but instead to end the process of protest and pressure. It is a hypocritical gesture, not a constructive first step."[3]

Tokenism, then, was a new method of denying Negro aspirations to equality. The hard facts confronting Negroes in 1963 were court decisions that did not fundamentally alter the pattern of segregated and unequal schools, political appointments that did not alter Negro exclusion from political power in large areas, and a civil rights act that failed to remove many political and economic barriers to Negro progress. Resentment was natural, but the problem was to find some technique that could mobilize this discontent into an effective force for social change. Indeed, Dr. King argues that the history of the Negro since emancipation is, in part, the story of a search for "the elusive path to freedom."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 20. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 22.

Negro History: A Search for the Proper Technique of Social Change

Dr. King believes that Negroes have never been content with their inferior position in American society. But the problem has always been to find a technique of change suitable for gaining their human and constitutional rights. Various techniques have been tried. Booker T. Washington advised Negroes to: "Let down your buckets where you are."[2] Or, as Dr. King rephrases it: "Be content, he said in effect, with doing well what the times permit you to do at all."[3] Negroes soon rejected this philosophy, according to Dr. King, because it offered "too little freedom in its present and too little promise in its future."[4]

Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, at the turn of the century, offered another philosophy. He called for the "talented tenth" to advance and pull the race up with it. Dr. King admits that this philosophy helped to counteract the resignation implicit in Booker T. Washington's advice, but he charges that in this method: "there was no role for the whole people. It was a tactic for an aristocratic elite who would themselves be benefited while leaving behind the 'untalented' 90 per cent."[1]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 22. [2] *Ibid*., p. 33. [3] *Ibid*. [4] *Ibid*.

Marcus Garvey's call for racial pride and a return to Africa stirred a powerful emotional response among Negroes after World War I. His philosophy was attractive to Negroes, according to Dr. King, because it appealed to the "truth" that there was "reason to be proud of their heritage as well as of their bitterly won achievements."[2] But, "his plan was doomed because an exodus to Africa in the twentieth century by a people who had struck roots for three and a half centuries in the New World did not have the ring of progress."[3]

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People succeeded the Garvey movement. Relying primarily upon education and application of the Constitution and federal law through the federal courts, it was the main instrument of Negro advancement for nearly thirty years. It achieved substantial victories by litigation, especially in regard to the right of Negroes to participate in national elections and in the field of equal education, but Dr. King states that:

> ...the failure of the nation, over a decade, to implement the majestic implications of these decisions caused the slow ebb of the Negro's faith in litigation as the dominant method to achieve his freedom. In his eyes, the doctrine of legal change had become the doctrine of slow token change and, as a sole weapon of struggle, now proved its unsuitability.[4]

Rivals of Nonviolence, 1955-1963

The failure of litigation to defeat tokenism led to a search for alternatives. One alternative was violence, the call for a "colossal blood bath to cleanse the nation's ills."[1] Dr. King argues that the Negro's desperation prepared him for death if necessary, but:

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[1] *Ibid*. [2] *Ibid*., p. 23. [3] *Ibid*. [4] *Ibid*.

> ...the Negro in the South in 1955, assessing the power of the forces arrayed against him, could not perceive the slightest prospect of victory in this approach. He was unarmed, unorganized, untrained, disunited and, most important, psychologically and morally unprepared for the deliberate spilling of blood.[2]

Elaborating on this unwillingness to resort to violence, Dr. King notes that throughout the South in the years prior to the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-1956 Negro churches and ministers had played an increasing role in the fight for racial justice.

> The doctrine they preached was a nonviolent doctrine. It was not a doctrine that made their followers yearn for revenge but one that called upon them to champion change. It was not a doctrine that asked an eye for an eye but one that summoned men to seek to open the eyes of blind prejudice. The Negro turned his back on force not only because he knew he could not win his freedom through physical force but also because he believed that through physical force he could lose his soul.[3]

Southern Negroes rejected violence as immoral and impractical, according to Dr. King, but the continued refusal of whites to treat Negroes as equals led to a renewal of the philosophy of racial pride and racial separation that had been preached by Marcus Garvey after World War I. The new advocates of black nationalism were typified by the Black Muslims who taught the superiority of blacks, the necessity of discipline and self-help, and the desirability of racial separation--though in this nation, not by a return to Africa.[4] Dr. King argues that the Black Muslim movement gained little support in the Negro community,[5] and that: "Most of those to whom the Muslims appealed were in fact expressing resentment for the lack of militancy which had long prevailed in the freedom movement. When the Negroes' fighting spirit soared in the summer of 1963, the appeal of the Muslims declined precipitously."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 24. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 25. [4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

A third alternative to the NAACP's litigation, a political alliance of the poor of all races, was proposed by Dr. King and other civil rights leaders in the period from 1955 to 1963. The proposed alliance was logical, according to Dr. King, because "it is undeniable that great masses of southern whites exist in conditions scarcely better than those which afflict the Negro,"[2] but,

> . . . the rationale of the theory wilted under the heat of fact. The need for immediate change was more urgently felt and more bitterly realized by the Negro than by the exploited white. As individuals, the whites could better their situation without the barrier that society places in front of a man whose racial identification by color is inescapable. Moreover, the underprivileged southern whites saw the color that separated them from Negroes more clearly than they saw the circumstances that bound them together in mutual interest. Negroes were therefore forced to face the fact that, in the South, they must move without allies. . . .[3]

Dr. King argues that the slow pace of court-ordered racial progress forced Negroes to consider alternative methods of change. Some argued for violence, but violence appeared to offer little prospect of victory to an untrained and unorganized minority, and violence was repugnant to many Negroes on moral and religious grounds as well. Black Muslims and black nationalists offered racial pride through racial separation, but most Negroes wanted into society, not out of it. A third proposal, a modern Populist movement based on the poor of all races, was defeated by the color prejudice of poor whites. Increasingly in this period, though, the attention of the Negro, and the nation, was drawn to the technique of nonviolent demonstrations. The Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-56 catapulted Martin Luther King and nonviolence to the center of the national attention. The student sit-ins of the early 1960's recaptured the headlines and stirred many to consider nonviolence as a technique of protest.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 26.

[3] Ibid. Yet Dr. King has called for just such an alliance. See, for example, pp. 142-143 or Stride Toward Freedom, pp. 203-204.

The Appropriateness of Nonviolence

Dr. King argues that nonviolence has certain advantages that make it specially appropriate to the Negro protest movement in America. Nonviolence provides an alternative to both acquienscence and violence; nonviolence complements rather than replaces litigation, legislation, and other techniques of change; nonviolence engages the many in defense of their own rights, thereby giving them dignity and healing old psychological wounds; nonviolence paralyses and confuses the opponent and lessens his use of violence; and, finally, nonviolence does all these things in a manner consistent with morality and religion and in a way that allows reconciliation.

Neither acquiescence nor violence. Traditionally, according to Dr. King, the oppressed have reacted to their oppression by either acquiescing in it or by violently rebelling against it.[1] Acquiescence may stem from fear of reprisal or from the preference for what is known to the dangers of the unknown.

> Almost 2,800 years ago Moses set out to lead the children of Israel from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the promised land. He soon discovered that slaves do not always welcome their deliverers.

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[1] *Stride Toward Freedom*, pp. 211-212.

> They become accustomed to being slaves. They would rather bear those ills they have, as Shakespeare pointed out, than flee to others that they know not of.[1]

Acquiescence may also stem from exhaustion and despair of change. "A few years ago in the slum areas of Atlanta, a Negro guitarist used to sing almost daily: 'Ben down so long that down don't bother me.' This is the type of negative freedom and resignation that often engulfs the life of the oppressed."[2]

But acquiescence in an unjust system is wrong, Dr. King argues. To acquiesce "is to say to the oppressor that his actions are morally right. It is a way of allowing his conscience to fall asleep."[3] By failing to protest injustice the oppressed "fails to be his brother's keeper."[4] Acquiescence is the way of the coward.[5] It "is interpreted as proof of the Negro's inferiority."[6]

Violent rebellion is the traditional alternative to acquiescence. And Dr. King admits that violence "often brings about momentary results."[7] Nevertheless, he harshly condemns violence as a method of ending racial oppression.

> Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers. A voice echoes through time saying to every potential Peter, "Put up your sword." History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations that failed to follow this command.
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> If the American Negro and other victims of oppression succumb

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1. Ibid., p. 212. 2. Ibid. 3. Ibid. 4. Ibid. 5. Ibid.

6. Ibid. 7. Ibid.

> to the temptation of using violence in the struggle for freedom, future generations will be the recipients of a desolate night of bitterness, and our chief legacy to them will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos. Violence is not the way.[1]

Nonviolent protest, according to Dr. King, provides an alternative to both acquiescence and violence.

> Like the synthesis in Hegelian philosophy, the principle of nonviolent resistance seeks to reconcile the truths of two opposites--acquiescence and violence--while avoiding the extremes and immoralities of both. The nonviolent resister agrees with the person who acquiesces that one should not be physically aggressive toward his opponent, but he balances the equation by agreeing with the person of violence that evil must be resisted. He avoids the nonresistance of the former and the violent resistance of the latter. With nonviolent resistance, no individual or group need submit to any wrong, nor need anyone resort to violence in order to right a wrong.[2]

A complement to other techniques. One of the great advantages of nonviolence, in Dr. King's view, is that it complements rather than replaces litigation, legislation, and other techniques of change.

> Direct action is not a substitute for work in the courts and the halls of government. Bringing about passage of a new and broad law by a city council, state legislature or the Congress, or pleading cases before the courts of the land, does not eliminate the necessity for bringing about the mass dramatization of injustice in front of a city hall. Indeed, direct action and legal action complement one another; when skillfully employed, each becomes more effective.[3]

An example of the complementary nature of nonviolent action is cited by Dr. King. It deals with the interaction of demonstrations and litigation in the sit-in movement.

> ...the lunch-counter sit-ins accomplished integration in hundreds of communities at the swiftest rate of change in the civil-rights movement up to that time. Yet, many communities successfully resisted lunch-counter desegregation, and pressed charges against the demonstrators.. [But] ...by creative use of the law, it was possible to prove that

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1. _Ibid._, p. 213. 2. _Ibid._, pp. 213-214.

3. _Why We Can't Wait_, p. 33.

> officials combating the demonstrations were using the power of the police state to deny the Negro equal protection under the law. This brought many of the cases squarely under the jurisdiction of the Fourteenth Amendment. As a consequence of combining direct and legal action, far-reaching precedents were established, which served, in turn, to extend the areas of desegregation.[1]

Dr. King might well have cited the Montgomery bus boycott that made him a leader of the protest movement. The boycott, which had endured for twelve months, was threatened by a city legal action against the car pool that in part made it possible, but on the very day of the hearing the United States Supreme Court affirmed a U. S. District Court "in declaring Alabama's state and local laws requiring segregation on buses unconstitutional."[2]

In the Montgomery case issues arising from demonstrations and boycotts were settled by the courts; in the later cases of the Birmingham and Selma demonstrations, marches and counter-violence were instrumental in molding the climate of opinion that allowed passage of civil rights legislation. Moreover, the demonstrations and the news coverage they inspired were surely educational and persuasive devices in bringing issues before the American public and forcing that public to confront its conscience and its claims of being a nation of freedom and equal justice under law. Nonviolence, then, may precipitate change through the courts or through the legislative bodies. Nonviolence is, then, a technique that complements and utilizes the more formal processes of change.

Because Dr. King perceives nonviolence as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, other techniques of change, he has never advised sole reliance upon nonviolent demonstrations and protest. In Montgomery,

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1. Ibid., pp. 33-34.

2. Stride Toward Freedom, P. 160.

for example, nonviolence included recourse to economic pressure and the courts, and at other times Dr. King has called for Negro voter registration and political participation. In Why We Can't Wait, published in 1963, Dr. King argued that: "Negroes have traditionally positioned themselves too far from the inner arena of political decision."[1] The time had come, Dr. King argued, "for Negroes to abandon abstract political neutrality and become less timid about voting alliances."[2] "We can and should," Dr. King argued, "selectively back candidates whose record justifies confidence. We can, because of our strength; we should, because those who work with us must feel we can help them concretely."[3]

The potential power of Negroes is large, according to Dr. King, because of the strategic location of Negroes in the large cities. This location may provide the balance of power in large states in Presidential elections, he adds.[4] And, "Already, in some states and cities of the South, a de-facto alliance of Negro and sympathetic white voters has elected a new type of local official--nonintegrationist, but nonsegregationist too."[5] Furthermore, with further registration and voting, Negroes can help defeat the Southern domination of key congressional committees which blocks key reform legislation.[6] Dr. King concluded: "Consciously and creatively developed, political power may well, in the days to come, be the most effective new tool of the Negro's liberation."[7] Nonviolence, then, is not a substitute for other techniques of change. Instead, it is a complement or supplement to other techniques that brings them into play more effectively.

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1. Why We Can't Wait, p. 163. 2. Ibid., p. 164. 3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp. 164-65. 5. Ibid., p. 165. 6. Ibid., pp. 165-66.

7. Ibid., p. 167.

The dignity of participation: psychological benefits to the oppressed. One of the great merits of nonviolence, according to Dr. King, is that it allows direct participation by the oppressed in the attempt to relieve their condition. This participation is not limited, as it is in armies of violence, to young males in excellent health. As Dr. King puts it: ". . . the lame and the halt and the crippled could and did join up. Al Hibbler, the sightless singer, would never have been accepted in the United States Army or the army of any other nation, but he held a commanding position in our ranks."[1]

In addition to the physically handicapped, the nonviolent army can use women, children, the aged. This has drawn criticism, especially the use of children, but Dr. King has responded by asking:

> Where had these writers been, we wondered, during the centuries when our segregated social system had been misusing and abusing Negro children? Where had they been with their protective words when, down through the years, Negro infants were born into ghettos, taking their first breath of life in a social atmosphere where the fresh air of freedom was crowded out by the stench of discrimination?[2]
>
> . . . .
>
> The children understood the stakes they were fighting for. I think of one teen-age boy whose father's devotion to the movement turned sour when he learned that his son had pledged himself to become a demonstrator. The father forbade his son to participate.
>
> "Daddy," the boy said, "I don't want to disobey you, but I have made my pledge. If you try to keep me home, I will sneak off. If you think I deserve to be punished for that, I'll just have to take the punishment. For, you see, I'm not doing this only because I want to be free. I'm doing it also because I want freedom for you and Mama, and I want it to come before you die."[3]

The widespread participation gives a democratic quality to nonviolent protest. Dr. King makes a point of it:

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[1] Ibid., p. 29.

[2] Ibid., p. 103.

[3] Ibid., p. 104.

> In armies of violence, there is a caste of rank. In Birmingham, outside of the few generals and lieutenants who necessarily directed and co-ordinated operations, the regiments of the demonstrators marched in democratic phalanx. Doctors marched with window cleaners. Lawyers demonstrated with laundresses. Ph. D.'s and no-D's were treated with perfect equality. . . .[1]

As Dr. King sums it up, "In the nonviolent army, there is room for everyone who wants to join up."[2]

The technique of nonviolent protest allowed the widest possible participation by the Negro community in defense of its rights. The resulting sense of involvement helped to foster, in Dr. King's opinion, a dignity that was vital to the psychological health of a group that had long been taught its inferiority and half-believed it on the basis of its own submissive actions.

> Nonviolence had tremendous psychological importance to the Negro. He had to win and to vindicate his dignity in order to merit and enjoy his self-esteem. He had to let white men know that the picture of him as a clown--irresponsible, resigned and believing in his own inferiority--was a stereotype with no validity. This method was grasped by the Negro masses because it embodied the dignity of struggle, of moral conviction and self-sacrifice.[3]

If Dr. King is correct, participation in nonviolent protests helped to heal old psychological wounds. But he adds that the psychological benefits were not confined to those who actively participated; by a process of indentification with the participants, non-participants too felt a greater dignity and pride in their race.

> To measure what this meant to the Negro may not be easy. But I am convinced that the courage and discipline with which Negro thousands accepted nonviolence healed the internal wounds of Negro millions who did not themselves march in the streets or sit in the jails of the South. One need not participate directly in order to be involved. For Negroes all over this nation, to identify with the movement, to have pride in those who were the principals, and to give moral, financial

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1. *Ibid*., p. 29.
2. *Ibid*.
3. *Ibid*., p. 31.

> or spiritual support were to restore to them some of the pride and honor which had been stripped from them over the centuries.[1]

The result of the nonviolent protest was a change, "within the minds of millions of Negroes...The Negro became, in his own estimation, the equal of any man."[2]

Long continued oppression often instills a sense of inferiority in the oppressed. But it may also breed a sense of frustration and hatred of the oppressor. Dr. King argues that these emotions too are relieved by nonviolent protest. Referring to the Negro demonstrator, he says: "In addition to being consistent with his religious precepts, it served his need to act on his own for his own liberation. It enabled him to transmute hatred into constructive energy, to seek not only to free himself but to free his oppressor from his sins."[3] Indeed, the alternative to nonviolence is, in Dr. King's opinion, violence.

> The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides--and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history.[4]

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1. Ibid. For Dr. King's assessment of the effects of the boycott on the self-respect, cleanliness, and morals of the Negro community in Montgomery, see Stride Toward Freedom, pp. 187-188. Yet Chicago Police Superintendent O. W. Wilson has observed that Dr. King's demonstrations in Chicago in the summer and fall of 1966 were followed by a substantially increased rate of crime (up from seven to ten per cent from the previous year) and he has stated that: "I can only conclude from this that the civil unrest engendered an attitude of lawlessness and irresponsibility which may continue for some time after the disturbances have ended." Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee) November 17, 1966, p. 23. But in the same dispatch Superintendent Wilson gave an alternative explanation for the increased crime--that the demonstrations "disrupted police crime-fighting duties."

2. Why We Can't Wait, pp. 120-121.

3. Ibid., p. 28. 4. Ibid., p. 91.

Nonviolent protest engages the many--old and young, strong and lame, rich and poor--in defense of their own rights. Martin Luther King argues that the courage and discipline required by nonviolence end the gnawing doubt of inferiority and produce self-respect and dignity; the constructive action releases pent-up frustration and discontent without producing hatred and violence; and the mass participation, with its accompanying sense of identification on the part of the non-participants, fosters a sense of community and solidarity among all classes of Negroes.

Psychological effects on opponents and spectators. Nonviolence produces important psychological effects upon those who witness or oppose the demonstrations as well as upon those who participate. Dr. King argues, for example, that the courage and discipline required of the nonviolent protester tend to dispel, in the onlooker's eyes, the myth of Negro inferiority. "Even the most reluctant are forced to recognize that no inferior people could choose and successfully pursue a course involving such extensive sacrifice, bravery, and skill."[1] The nonviolent demonstrations in the deep South in particular, where police were often hostile or absent, required a rare courage, and Dr. King argues that the display of courage had an effect:

> When, for decades, you have been able to make a man compromise his manhood by threatening him with a cruel and unjust punishment, and when suddenly he turns upon you and says: "Punish me. I do not deserve it. But because I do not deserve it, I will accept it so that the world will know that I am right and you are wrong," you hardly know what to do. You feel defeated and secretly ashamed. You know that this man is as good a man as you are...[2]

The courage of those who protested nonviolently and their voluntary acceptance of underserved suffering shamed the opponents, according to Dr. King. But he argues that it did more: it left opponents confused as to how to react.

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 132.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 19.

> Nonviolent resistance paralyzed and confused the power structures against which it was directed. The brutality with which officials would have quelled the black individual became impotent when it could not be pursued with stealth and remain unobserved. It was caught--as a fugitive from a penitentiary is often caught--in gigantic circling spotlights. It was imprisoned in a luminous glare revealing the naked truth to the whole world.[1]

Though many demonstrators suffered violence and a few died as a result of it, it is Dr. King's opinion that the courage of the marchers and the glare of publicity actually reduced the amount of violence used to suppress the Negro protest below the level that could have been anticipated on the basis of past Southern performance.

> The striking thing about the nonviolent crusade of 1963 was that so few felt the sting of bullets or the clubbing of billies and nightsticks. Looking back, it becomes obvious that the oppressors were restrained not only because the world was looking but also because, standing before them, were hundreds, sometimes thousands, of Negroes who for the first time dared to look back at a white man, eye to eye. Whether through a decision to exercise wise restraint or the operation of a guilty conscience, many a hand was stayed on a police club...[2]

Nonviolence, in the opinion of Dr. King, confuses the opponent, spotlights him in a glare of publicity, and reduces his psychological readiness to resort to violence. In addition, he argues, nonviolence appeals strongly to the conscience of the spectator, especially so when the demonstrator is dealt with harshly by the opponent. The example cited is Birmingham. When Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene "Bull" Connor's police drove Dr. King's demonstrators from the streets, the newspapers of the land "carried pictures of prostrate women, and policemen bending over them with raised clubs; of children marching up to the bared fangs of police dogs; of the terrible force of pressure hoses sweeping bodies into the streets."[3] Yet the demonstrators remained nonviolent. The result, Dr. King argues, was that "the moral conscience of the nation was deeply stirred and, all over the country, our fight became the fight of decent Americans of all races and creed."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 30. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 106.

Any attack upon the nonviolent demonstrators gains for them the sympathy and backing of many spectators. This, in turn, inhibits further attacks.

> When . . . the mass movement repudiates violence while moving resolutely toward its goal, its opponents are revealed as the instigators and practitioners of violence if it occurs. Then public support is magnetically attracted to the advocates of nonviolence, while those who employ violence are literally disarmed by overwhelming sentiment against their stand.[2]

Nonviolence, then, if Dr. King is correct, tends to confuse the opponent, reduces his confidence in his innate superiority, and even induces in him a sense of guilt or fear. In addition, the dramatic nature of a mass nonviolent protest captures the public's eye and produces a great sympathy for the demonstrators if they are brutally suppressed. Fear of that reaction inhibits the use of force to suppress the demonstrations.

A moral technique leading to reconciliation. The final arguments for the appropriateness of nonviolence stem from the morality of its method and the resulting possibility of reconciliation between the opposing sides. Dr. King argues that nonviolence is consistent with the precepts of morality and religion because it is based on love, even love of the oppressor;[3] because its goal is reconciliation and brotherhood, not the humiliation of its opponents;[4] and because its means--noncooperation with evil, acceptance rather than infliction of suffering, avoidance of violence of spirit and body--are as moral as its ends.[5]

Nonviolence is appropriate, not only because it is compatible with morality and religion, but because it avoids the pitfalls that make violent protest a stumbling clock to reconciliation. It avoids, according to Dr. King, the hatred, bitterness and desire for revenge that result from a course of violence.[1] It avoids also the fear of "a guilt-ridden white minority" that Negroes on gaining power "would act without restraint or pity to revenge the injustices and brutality of the years."[2] Indeed, in Dr. King's opinion, "A mass movement exercising nonviolence is an object lesson in power under discipline, a demonstration to the white community that if such a movement attained a degree of strength, it would use its power creatively and not vengefully."[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Stride Toward Freedom, p. 215.

[3] Ibid., pp. 103-06.

[4] Ibid., p. 102.

[5] "Love, Law and Civil Disobedience," New South, XVI (December, 1961), 4.

Still, in the final analysis, nonviolence permits reconciliation because it appeals to the conscience. Dr. King makes the argument in reference to school integration:

> But what can be done to mitigate the fears, to disperse the hatred, violence, and irrationality gathered around school integration, to take the initiative out of the hands of racial demagogues, to release respect for the law? In the end, for laws to be obeyed, men must believe they are right.
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> Here nonviolence comes in as the ultimate form of persuasion. It is the method which seeks to implement the just law by appealing to the conscience of the great decent majority who through blindness, fear, pride, or irrationality have allowed their consciences to sleep.[4]

A just cause, sought by a disciplined and courageous group that renounces violence and vengeance and is willing to accept upon itself the suffering that is the penalty of its protest, makes a powerful appeal to the conscience, the more so the more brutally its opponents act in attempting to suppress it. It is upon the appeal to conscience that nonviolence finally depends.

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[1] Stride Toward Freedom, pp. 213 and 215. [2] Ibid., p. 215.

[3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., p. 216.

Dr. King argues that nonviolence is a peculiarly appropriate social technique for use by Negroes to gain their human rights. It provides an alternative to both acquiescence in an unjust system and hate-engendering violent revolt; it enhances the dignity and self-respect of those who utilize it and those who identify with them while reducing the inclination and opportunity for violence by those who oppose the movement; and finally, it does all this in a moral manner that permits the eventual reconciliation of the opposing sides. Dr. King concludes that nonviolence is:

> ...a powerful and just weapon. It is a weapon unique in history, which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals. Both a practical and a moral answer to the Negro's cry for justice, nonviolent direct action proved that it could win victories without losing wars, and so became the triumphant tactic of the Negro Revolution of 1963.[1]

An Explanation of the Slow Acceptance of Nonviolence

The "Negro Revolution" perceived by Dr. King occurred in the summer of 1963. That revolution was made possible, in Dr. King's opinion, by a combination of Negro discontent and the adoption of a suitable technique of protest--mass nonviolent demonstrations.[2] But what accounts for the delay of nearly eight years between the successful employment of nonviolence in Montgomery and the fervant mass acceptance of the technique in the summer of 1963? Dr. King argues that a number of factors were involved.

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1. Why We Can't Wait, p. 14.

2. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

One factor in the delay, if Dr. King is correct, was the opposition to nonviolence by both conservatives and militants. The conservatives were tied to traditional methods of protest by the honor they had won in the employment of those methods,[1] while the "militant extremists" opposed nonviolence as lacking in militancy.[2] The combined opposition of those who trusted and had a vested interest in the old techniques and those who, by their angry calls for arming and violence, sounded most militant confused Negroes and delayed the adoption of nonviolence.[3] Dr. King revealed his own assessment of these groups and their tactics: "The conservatives who say, 'Let us not move so fast,' and the extremists who say, 'Let's go out and whip the world,' would tell you they are as far apart as the poles. But there is a striking parallel: They accomplish nothing. . . ."[4]

A second factor delaying the adoption of nonviolence was, according to Dr. King, the prevalence of the view that nonviolence was a substitute rather than a supplement for older techniques of protest.[5] Those holding this view thought a choice had to be made between nonviolence and other techniques of change, and this divided the protest movement into those supporting nonviolence and those supporting other techniques. The result, in Dr. King's opinion, was needless debate and delay in the adoption of nonviolence as a supplement to older techniques of protest.[6]

A third factor slowing the adoption of nonviolence was, in Dr. King's view, a widespread belief that the Montgomery campaign was an isolated phenomenon that could not be duplicated elsewhere because Negroes elsewhere would not make the necessary sacrifices.[1] Moreover, the apparent failure of the Albany, Georgia, campaign of 1962 tended to confirm the belief that the Montgomery experience was not readily transferable, and Dr. King, while denying that Albany was a complete failure, admits that mistakes were made by the leaders of the campaign, of whom he was the most prominent.[2] He argues, though, that: "Even had nonviolent resistance been soundly defeated in Albany, the alacrity with which the bells were tolled for it must arouse suspicion. The prompt interment of the theory was not a judicious conclusion but an attack."[3] His own conclusions on the significance of Albany were different:

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 32.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_.

[4] _Ibid_., pp. 32-33.

[5] _Ibid_., p. 33.

[6] _Ibid_., pp. 33-34.

> Albany, in fact, had proved how extraordinary was the Negro response to the appeal of nonviolence. Approximately 5 per cent of the total Negro population went willingly to jail. Were that percentage duplicated in New York City, some fifty thousand Negroes would overflow its prisons. If a people can produce from its ranks 5 per cent who will go voluntarily to jail for a just cause, surely nothing can thwart its ultimate triumph.[4]

Still, as Dr. King admits, Albany was seen as a failure, and it slowed the adoption of nonviolence.[5]

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1. Ibid., pp. 33-34. 2. Ibid., p. 34. 3. Ibid., pp. 34-35. 4. Ibid., p. 35.

5. For a full treatment of the Albany campaign, see Howard Zinn, The Southern Mystique, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), pp. 147-213, or SNCC: The New Abolitionists, (Second edition: Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), pp. 123-46. Howard Zinn argues, persuasively, that the Albany campaign failed because the federal executive failed to enforce the Constitutional and legal rights of those who protested, and, in the absence of such protection, the local police chief, Laurie Pritchett, was able to suppress the movement by simply jailing anyone and everyone who rode-in, prayed-in, sat-in, or attempted to exercise any legal rights conflicting with the segregation system. The national press, Zinn notes, nearly ignored the blatant denial of Negro rights, but it praised Pritchett because his actions (suppressing those rights) were done without brutality and violence. Professor Zinn concludes, from the Albany experience, that the United States Constitution, Supreme Court rulings and laws are meaningless unless the federal executive is willing to enforce them, and he points out that federal will was lacking in Albany and has been all over the South. The only answer, according to Professor Zinn, to Southern resistance is a federal force present in the South that is willing to make arrests for violations of civil rights in the same manner that the F.B.I now does for bank robbery or other crimes, and a blanket of injunctions prohibiting Southern officials from interfering with civil rights.

The disappointment of Albany was erased by the campaign in Birmingham in the spring and summer of 1963. That campaign in the heart of segregated Alabama demonstrated that Negroes had the courage and readiness to sacrifice that are required if nonviolence is to be successful. Mass acceptance of the technique of mass nonviolent demonstrations followed as new campaigns erupted all over the South. In Dr. King's words:

> Birmingham was to emerge with a delicately poised peace, but without awaiting its implementation the Negro seized the weapon that had won that dangerous peace and swept across the land with it.
>
> The victory of the theory of nonviolent direct action was a fact. Faith in this method had come to maturity in Birmingham. As a result, the whole spectrum of the civil rights struggle would undergo basic change.[1]

Beyond Rhetoric: The Strategy of Nonviolence

There is, or was, a rhetoric of nonviolence that may be summarized as follows. Group A is treated unjustly, victimized, by group B. Group A, or some members thereof, protest the injustice nonviolently, presenting their bodies as testimony to the evil and evidence of their willingness to suffer to protest that evil. This produces a confrontation in which group B reacts, initially, with rage and violence, but group A refuses to react with counter-violence. Seeing group A accept suffering without retaliating, group B is so shamed by its own violence that it is forced to confront its conscience, whereupon group B recognized the justice of group A's position, repents, and accepts the proffered hand of friendship and brotherhood. Group A and B then march off, arm in arm, reconciled, and presumably live in harmony and justice ever after. In this rhetorical version of nonviolence, the confrontation is followed almost immediately by moral conversion and reconciliation.

The popular image of Dr. King's teachings, especially in the late fifties and early sixties, was probably similar to the above rhetoric. Certainly great emphasis was placed, and rightly, on Dr. King's doctrines of love of the oppressor, the redeeming qualities of voluntarily accepted suffering, the persuasive qualities of nonviolence, and the goals of brotherhood and reconciliation. And yet, neither the actions nor words of Dr. King indicate that he held, or now holds, such a simplified understanding of the dynamics of nonviolence.

It was the Montgomery campaign that catapulted Martin Luther King and nonviolence to public attention in this country. Yet even there nonviolence did not follow the simple sequence of confrontation, moral awakening, repentance and reconciliation. In fact, as Dr. King admits in his own account of the long campaign, the boycott was on the brink of failure when saved by a United States Supreme Court decision holding that segregation on the buses was unconstitutional.[1] In fact, then, the long campaign of nonviolence was brought to a successful conclusion by legal coercion rather than moral persuasion. Dr. King admits as much. Indeed, he notes in his account of the campaign that at its conclusion the whites of Montgomery, or some of them, were so far from being converted and reconciled that the integration of the buses was followed by a series of acts of violence and terror. Initially, snipers forced a temporary cancellation of night bus trips. Shortly thereafter, on January 9, 1957, two Negro homes and four Negro churches were bombed. Still later, two more bombings occurred, and though these ended the reign of terror,[2] Dr. King is forced to conclude: ". . . it would be false to imply that the majority of white people in Montgomery have ceased to oppose integration. The opposite is closer to the truth."[1]

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[1] Stride Toward Freedom, pp. 158-160.

[2] Ibid., pp. 37-38.

The immediate and local reaction to nonviolent protest is unlikely to follow the rhetorical pattern of confrontation, conversion and reconciliation. In this regard Montgomery and later campaigns tended to confirm Jawaharlal Nehru's observation to Dr. King that "...the British were never so angry as when the Indians resisted them with nonviolence, that he never saw eyes so full of hate as those of the British troops to whom he turned the other cheek when they beat him with lathes."[2] On the basis of his experience in Montgomery and his consultation with Nehru, Dr. King was force to conclude: "This method of nonviolence will not work miracles overnight. Men are not easily moved from their mental ruts, their prejudiced and irrational feelings. When the underprivileged demand freedom, the privileged first react with bitterness and resistance."[3]

If the object of a campaign of nonviolence is not, on the local level, immediate conversion and reconciliation, then what is it? Dr. King argues that part of the usefulness of a campaign of nonviolence is to be found in the desirable psychological effects it has on the Negro participants and the Negro community. The participants, by their purposeful and courageous action on their own behalf, gain a sense of self-respect and dignity that heals old psychological wounds caused by the system and stereotypes of segregation.[4] The community, by a process of identification, shares in this healing and loses its fear.[5] And finally, a new sense of involvement and unity pervades the community.[6] But the purpose of a nonviolent campaign is to produce external change in conditions as well as an internal change in the attitudes of the protesting group. Protests begin with grievances that the protesting group wants removed and nonviolent demonstrations are part of a strategy to produce change and remove those grievances. That strategy rests on certain conclusions about the dynamics of social change that are widely challenged in this society.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 174-175 and 178. [2] Ibid., p. 184. [3] Ibid., p. 219.

[4] Ibid., p. 218. [5] Ibid., p. 219 and Why We Can't Wait, p. 40.

[6] Why We Can't Wait, p. 31, and Stride Toward Freedom, p. 187.

The first of these conclusions, based in part on the hard experience of Negroes in American society, challenges a cherished notion of many Americans --that time itself is healing and will cure injustice. White moderates have often urged Negroes to "go slow" for a period on just this assumption. Dr. King calls this a "Strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills."[1] His own view, on which his strategy of nonviolence rests, is that: "Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation."[2]

Closely related to the myth that time itself is healing is the widely held view that the present is not the proper time to protest. This view is encountered again and again by those who demonstrate. It lends weight to the belief that oppressors and those not affected by the oppression will never recognize a "right" time for redress of grievances. On the basis of his own expreience, Dr. King says:

> Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well-timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "wait" has almost

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 89. [2] *Ibid.*

> always meant "never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."[1]

Dr. King's conclusion, on which his strategy of nonviolence rests, is that, "the time is always ripe to do right."[2]

But why should those who think they have grievance demonstrate and boycott? Why don't they rely on negotiation and orderly processes? Dr. King's response to such questions is that: "You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue."[3] One of the local goals of a campaign of nonviolence is to force the other side which has been unwilling to negotiate, to come to the bargaining table and negotiate meaningfully. As Dr. King states it: "The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation."[4] It may be argued that such pressure is unnecessary. Dr. King disagrees: "...we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily."[5] And, even more emphatically, "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."[6]

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[1] _Ibid_., pp. 82-83.

[2] _Ibid_., p. 89. It should be noted that this is taken not quite literally. Dr. King joined in the moratorium on demonstrations during the 1964 presidential campaign. But in gerneral, his response to "not now" is "now."

[3] _Ibid_., p. 81.

[4] _Ibid_., p. 82.

[5] _Ibid_.

[6] _Ibid_.

The basic premises of Dr. King's strategy of nonviolence rest on hard experience. These premises are that an oppressed group cannot rely on the mere passage of time to remove injustice because time itself is neutral and inaction becomes an ally of injustice. Neither can the oppressed group afford to wait until their oppressors and moderates think the time is ripe for negotiation, for to the unexploited the time is never right for negotiation until they feel the pressure of organized protest. And finally, though the call for negotiation is legitimate, it is fruitless unless a crisis is created, for oppressors rarely or never give up their privileges voluntarily. Thus, one of the fundamental purposes of mass demonstrations and boycotts is to create a situation so crisis-packed, or an economic pressure so great, that grievances can no longer be ignored, but must be negotiated.

On the local level, one of the basic purposes of a campaign of nonviolence is to force a negotiated settlement of grievances. To that end a crisis is generated that must be met by either negotiation or suppression of the demonstrators. In the South, at least, the latter course was often chosen, and more or less brutal methods ranging from use of tear gas and cattle prods to use of dogs, beatings or bombings were often relied upon for that purpose. From the segregationist point of view, brutal suppression proved to be an error. The forceful suppression of nonresisting protestors in front of television cameras and newspaper photographers posed the moral questions in a most dramatic fashion, and while local hearts did not appear to change, the national conscience was stirred. Intentionally or unintentionally, Dr. King discovered, at least by the time of the Birmingham campaign, that nonviolence can be a potent political weapon. He, like many others, attributed passage of the 1964 civil rights bill to "the explosion of Birmingham"[1] with its spectacle of

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[1] Ibid., p. 128.

"prostrate women, and policemen bending over them with raised clubs; of children marching up to the bared fangs of police dogs; of the terrible force of pressure hoses sweeping bodies into the streets."[1] The brutality, followed by bombings, was matched by courageous and mainly nonviolent protest, and in Dr. King's words: ". . . the moral conscience of the nation was deeply stirred and, all over the country, our fight became the fight of decent Americans of all races and creeds."[2] Nonviolence, then, far from being restricted to local affairs, became a device for appealing to the nation and became, in the process, a powerful political weapon.

The essentials of a strategy of nonviolence aimed at producing political results are simple. A site for protest must be chosen that will produce a symbolic and dramatic confrontation of justice and reason with injustice and brutality. The best place for a campaign designed to produce political results is not one where local authorities are most likely to negotiate meaningfully, but rather one where they are likely to react belligerently or even violently. Brutal suppression of nonviolent protestors outrages outsiders who then may bring moral, economic or political pressure to bear. Nonviolence, then, at least in its political use, does rely on persuasion, and immediate persuasion at that. But it is the outsider rather than the local participants who are persuaded, and the local changes are brought about, not by a local change of heart, but by outside pressures and coercion.

The later campaigns of Dr. King, certainly since Birmingham, have been consciously political in design. They have sought the spectacular confrontation that will bring outside pressures--including the coercive powers of the government--to bear on those who would resist Negro aspirations for equality and a better life. As he put it in his 1966 assessment of the Negro protest movement: "A decade of sporadic and sometimes coordinated nonviolent action had educated him /the American Negro/ in the methodology of social change. He had learned how to compel the enactment of law, how to utilize to a degree some laws and how to expose spurious laws."[1] The purpose of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's involvement in the Meredith march, as stated by Dr. King, further illustrates the point: "We are picking up momentum every day. This demonstration will build up the kind of pressure we need on the Federal Government to get Federal registrars into more counties and bring about passage of the new civil rights bill."[2] The campaign for open housing in the North, specifically in Chicago, also had the enforcement of existing laws or the passage of new ones as an explicit part of its purpose. In a "Meet the Press" program of August 21, 1966, Dr. King argued that:

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 106

[2] *Ibid.*

> . . . in the South many white people do not want Negroes to eat at lunch counters, do not want Negroes to have access to hotels and motels and restaurants. But this did not stop the nation from having its conscience so aroused that it brought into being civil rights law as a result of our movement to end this.[3]

And he added:

> Now I think the same thing must happen to housing. The people have these fears, they have these prejudices and we are only saying that through legislation and a vigorous enforcement of fair-housing bills we will be able to change certain conditions. It doesn't mean that we will change the hearts of people, but we will change the laws

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[1] "The Last Steep Ascent," The Nation, CCII (March 14, 1966), 290.

[2] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), June 13, 1966, p. 10.

[3] Report of the National Broadcasting Corporation's televised program "Meet the Press" of August 21, 1966, carried in New York Times, August 22, 1966, p. 36C.

> and habits of people, and once their habits are changed pretty soon people adjust to them just as in the South they've adjusted to integrated public accommodations.[1]

Dr. King's strategy of using nonviolence as a lever to bring the coercive powers of the government to bear on the opposition depends upon developing a dramatic confrontation in which the opponents will be revealed as unreasonable or even hate-filled and brutal defenders of injustice while those who protest will appear, by contrast, as reasonable and courageous petitioners for justice. To be effective, the confrontation must be dramatic so that the nation will become aware of it and emotionally involved in it, and the demonstrators must be disciplined so that the blame for acting brutally and unreasonably will clearly belong to the opponents. If these conditions are met the conflict may become a symbolic clash of good and evil that will stir the nation's conscience and produce legal change.

The symbolic confrontation on which this technique depends may be developed by exploitation of some unplanned but dramatic event such as the brutal police action in Selma or the attempted assassination of Meredith at the beginning of his walk into Mississippi. In the absence of such events, a target must be deliberately selected that will produce, with a carefully planned campaign, the needed drama and symbolism. For such purposes Dr. King chooses certain key cities that he regards as symbols of the evil he attacks. His theory is that a victory in these key cities will have widespread effects, serving as a pattern for other cities and areas. He explains, for example, that:

> When SCLC went into Birmingham in 1963, we said that if this capital of segregation suffered even a single defeat the effects would radiate across the South. Birmingham has met a succession of defeats and is

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[1] *Ibid.*

> influencing not only the South but the North as well. Chicago is the capital of segregation in the North; transformations of its slums will leave no Northern city secure with its own.[1]

Rev. Andrew Young, one of Dr. King's closest associates, describes the Chicago campaign in these terms: "If we can bust the closed-housing market here for Negroes, it will be the first time anywhere in the nation. If we're successful here, then we can expect the same results in Philadelphia, Cleveland and other cities."[2]

Dr. King's strategy of nonviolence may be summarized as follows. A crisis is created, preferably in a key city, that must be resolved by meaningful negotiation or brutal suppression. The former, negotiation, leads to elimination of grievances and sets a pattern for other cities and towns. The latter, brutal suppression, may produce even more dramatic gains by shocking the nation into action. An aroused and outraged public will bring moral, economic and political pressures to bear, and, because of the general applicability of law, the resulting changes affect not only the immediate arena of conflict but the entire area or nation.

A New Challenge: The Resurgence of Violence

> Man, for years we've been trying to get the Mayor to come out and talk to us but he wouldn't come. For years we tried to get the Governor but he wouldn't come. For years we tried to get all those white folks downtown, the whole power structure to come and pay some attention to us and they wouldn't come. But after we burned, baby, the whole world came to look at us. You run out on those streets and there are so many

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[1] "The Last Steep Ascent," p. 291.

[2] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), August 16, 1966, p. 5.

> sociologists from the colleges that you will trip over them.[1]
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> Young Negro from Watts

Bayard Rustin, an opponent of violence, quotes the young Negro from Watts and concludes: "Any Negro youngster who doesn't believe now that the way to get something is through violence obviously is not intelligent."[2] The riots in Harlem, in Rochester, in Chicago and Atlanta, and above all in the Watts section of Los Angeles indicate that many Negroes, in despair and anger, have turned again to the traditional method of protest against exploitation or oppression--violence. And they have seen the results: attention, investigation, programs. And that is the crux of the problem. Though violence may be counterproductive, at least in the long run,[3] it releases tensions and hatreds in a manner that may appear to bring tangible results, at least in the short term.

Dr. King has steadfastly opposed a policy of violence. In the summer of 1964 he reacted to the riots in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant, in Rochester and in Jersey City by saying:

> I am sure that all people of good will join me in deploring these outbreaks of violence. Lawlessness, looting and violence cannot be condoned whether used by the racist or the reckless of any color. We must not advocate the use of immoral means to secure the moral end of racial justice.[4]

Dr. King has, in fact, even opposed the use of defensive violence, arguing that: "The line between defensive violence and aggressive violence is very thin. You get people to thinking in terms of violence when you have a movement that is built around defensive violence."[1] And he has summarized his own position by saying: "...I am committed to nonviolence absolutely, not merely as a technique or a passing strategy, but as a way of life."[2]

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[1] Quoted by Bayard Rustin, reported in New York Times, August 16, 1966, p. 34C.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Senator Edward William Brooke III, first Negro senator since Reconstruction, states that: "The Civil Rights bill of 1966 was lost because of rioting and violence. The Negro has to gain allies--not adversaries." "An Individual Who Happens To Be A Negro," Time, XIC (February 17, 1967), 21.

[4] King, "A Need For Soul-Searching," SCLC Newsletter, II (July-August, 1964), 7.

Dr. King condemns violence but he goes beyond moral condemnation to an analysis of the conditions that produce it and the steps that must be taken to prevent its recurrence. Thus, in reaction to the Los Angeles riots, he said: "I strongly deplore the violence. It is absolutely wrong, socially detestable and self-defeating. On the other hand, I equally deplore the continuation of ghetto life that millions of Negroes live in. They are in hopeless despair, and they feel they have no stake in society."[3] Dr. King argues that in 1963, after the march on Washington, many Negroes believed in the nation's commitment to equality and freedom for all. "Then," he adds, "shattered dreams and the persistence of grinding poverty drove a small but desperate group of Negroes into the swamp of senseless violence. Riots solved nothing, but they stunned the nation."[4] Ironically, according to Dr. King, white civil leaders began telling Negroes to adhere to nonviolence, forgetting that "_Negroes_ created the theory of nonviolence as it applies to American conditions," and forgetting that Negroes had to struggle for years to gain acceptance of the doctrine.[5] Worse still, Dr. King argues:

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[1] Cited in Roy Reed, "The Deacons, Too, Ride by Night," _New York Times Magazine_ (August 15, 1965), 24.

[2] King, _et al_, "What Can We Do To Keep Peace On Earth?" _Redbook_, 124 (January, 1965), 81.

[3] _Time_, 86 (August 20, 1965), 17.

[4] King, "Negroes Are _Not_ Moving Too Fast," _Saturday Evening Post_, 237 (November 7, 1964), 9.

[5] _Ibid_.

> ...a distorted understanding of nonviolence began to emerge among white leaders. They failed to perceive that nonviolence can exist only in a context of justice. When the white power structure calls upon the Negro to reject violence but does not impose upon itself the task of creating necessary social change, it is in fact asking for submission to injustice. Nothing in the theory of nonviolence counsels this suicidal course.
>
> The simple fact is that there cannot be nonviolence and tranquility without significant reforms of the evils that endangered the peace in the first place. It is the effort of the power structure to benefit from nonviolence without yielding meaningful change that it is responsible for the rise of elements who would discredit it.[1]

In Dr. King's analysis, there has been a resurgence of violence because whites have come to accept the benefits of nonviolence without paying the price--meaningful social change. Yet Negro acceptance of nonviolence depends, in the end, on real progress, on justice being obtained. Posed in more specific terms, Dr. King has argued that sole reliance upon legal action in the courts as the proper means for Negro protest was found inadequate and gave way to nonviolence, at least as a supplementary technique, because Negroes became convinced that court orders could only produce tokenism, not real change. He argues that the resurgence of violence stems from the same basic cause: the growing belief among people in the ghettos that nonviolence will not bring meaningful change to their lives. Believing this, they resort to violence. The solution to renewed violence, then, must be tangible gains in the ghettos, and Dr. King's move to the North, to Chicago, was designed to produce that tangible gain.

In order to survive, nonviolence must fulfill its promise and move beyond tokenism to significant gains in the ghetto. But clear calls to violence are not the only threat to Dr. King's doctrine. Two of the major civil rights organizations, the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, have moved from advocacy of nonviolence to advocacy of "black power." The term is ambiguous and has been subject to widely different interpretations. It first gained prominence during the Meredith march and at that time Dr. King, though dissatisfied with the term, attempted to give it an acceptable meaning. "It is generally agreed that to solve our problems we must have power. . . . We are seeking a shared power with whites."[1] Increasingly, however, the term was interpreted, rightly or wrongly, as implying violence and black nationalism. These connotations Dr. King has opposed though he has been careful not to break openly with the leaders of CORE and SNCC.[2] On the day following Stokely Carmichael's statement to a national television audience that nonviolence failed to go far enough to solve racial problems,[3] Dr. King went further and called for an end to talk of "black power."[4] He argued that: "It is absolutely necessary for the Negro to gain power, but the term 'black power' is unfortunate because it tends to give the impression of black nationalism."[5] And he added: "We must never seek power exclusively for the Negro but the sharing of power with the white people. Any other course is exchanging one form of tyranny for another."[6]

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[1] Ibid.

After a decade of use, nonviolence is attacked from two sides. Those who advocate violence or "black nationalism" condemn it as moderate and ineffective; those who favor legislation and court actions condemn it as a threat to past and future gains. In spite of the criticism, Dr. King believes that nonviolence is still the necessary instrument of future gains. In his words:

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[1] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), June 19, 1966, p. 18.

[2] Ibid., October 15, 1966, p. 10.

[3] New York Times, June 21, 1966, p. 1.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 30.

Mass nonviolent action continues to be the effective tactic of the movement. Many, especially in the North, argue that the maximum use of legislation, welfare and anti-poverty programs now replaces demonstrations, and that overt and visible protest should not be abandoned. Nothing could prove more erroneous than to demobilize at this point.[1]

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[1] "The Last Steep Ascent," p. 288.

Chapter II

THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY

CORE alone of the three major organizations employing nonviolent direct action for Negro rights has failed to capture prolonged public attention and a specific public image. Blanketed by the charisma of Martin Luther King on one side and the dramatic radicalism of SNCC on the other, CORE has had difficulty in carving its niche. It has had impressive spokesmen, but who can compete with the measured eloquence of Dr. King? It has had its courageous activists, but what can compete with the massive engagement of the students of SNCC in the heart of the South? It has called for radical departures, but what can match the attention grabbing demagoguery and radicalism of SNCC under the leadership of Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown?

CORE's best claims to uniqueness are its early advocacy of the theory and practice of the technique of nonviolence and its Northern and urban base. But even these claims have not served it well. To have practiced nonviolence on behalf of Negro rights a decade and a half before Dr. King is a dubious merit when CORE's own spokesmen admit that it was King who brought the technique to national attention and established it as a major means of protest.[1]

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[1] See, for example, James Farmer, former national director of CORE, in Freedom-When? (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 65-66, and James Peck, long-time editor of the CORElator, in Freedom Ride (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1962), p. 47.

To have originated in the Northern cities early in World War II and be forced to admit that it still had no roots in the Negro ghettos in the early 1960's is again more confession than proud claim.[1] CORE, then, has had peculiar problems in establishing itself against the alternative positions of more charismatic or dramatically radical organizations. Nevertheless, it has claims to attention based on its early practice of nonviolence and its considerable contribution to the movement.

CORE's Birth

CORE was founded in Chicago in 1942. The initial ideas for the organization are contained in two memoranda from James Farmer, then race relations secretary of FOR, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, to A. J. Muste, at that time the secretary of that pacifist religious organization. In the earlier of the memoranda, dated February 19, 1942, Farmer noted that FOR had, from its inception, sought ways of resolving conflicts without violence, ways of translating love of God and hatred of injustice into specific action.[2] This had led the Fellowship to a study of Gandhi's movement of "non-violent direct action" in India, and Gandhi's techniques seemed appropriate for two great areas of injustice in this nation--industrial relations and race relations.[3]

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[1] See James Farmer's statements in "Tough Years Ahead," Newsweek, LXVI (August 30, 1965), 19, and "Annual Report to the CORE National Convention, Durham, N.C., July 1, 1965," in Francis L. Broderick and August Meier (eds.), Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), p. 424.

[2] "Memorandum to A. J. Muste on Provisional Plans for Brotherhood Mobilization," in Broderick and Meier, pp. 211-213.

[3] Ibid., p. 211.

Farmer, writing his memoranda in the early months of World War II, stated that "for obvious reasons" industrial relations were "temporarily canceled as a field for great activity," but the field of race relations remained, "probably more urgent today than ever before since slavery."[1] Farmer noted in his memorandum the activities of the NAACP and the Urban League and called for their support as they had "proved their value from specialized angles," but he added that "they have also demonstrated their inadequacy in dealing effectively with the total aspects of a problem as comprehensive as race in America," and he concluded that there was a need for a new program based on nonviolent direct action.[2]

James Farmer argued in that first memorandum that the movement should be based on Gandhism even though differences in the problems of India and America precluded an uncritical duplication. He added that nonviolent direct action would not be effective without mass support and he concluded that it would therefore require a religious base and could not be limited entirely to pacifists. Still, he argued that the nucleus of the movement would have to be pacifist to prevent a degeneration into violence and he insisted that the movement should not call for mass direct action until discipline and training had been perfected.[3] On the basis of these observations, Farmer called on FOR to lay plans for a national "Brotherhood Mobilization" [his initial name for the project] to be organized on a five or ten year basis after which "relentless non-cooperation, economic boycott, civil disobedience, et cetera, will be thrown into swing wherever and whenever necessary."[4]

Farmer's second memorandum on Brotherhood Mobilization, dated March

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 211-212.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 212.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 213.

March 9, 1942, indicated the membership pattern he thought appropriate, the nature of the co-operative community he hoped to establish, and the basic aims of the organization. The membership of the organization would fall into three groups: The first and largest would be those people willing to work quietly and to abolish racial discrimination by means of education and moral persuasion; a second smaller group would enter a nation-wide co-operative community, sharing the burdens and destiny of the movement; the third and smallest group would be activists willing to engage in nonviolent direct action of various types--economic boycotts, non-co-operation, picketing, demonstrations, civil disobedience.[1]

The idea of a co-operative community was an important part of Farmer's early vision of CORE. This idea was based in part at least on Gandhi's programs to make Indian villages self-sufficient by handicraft industry,[2] and, as stated in the second memorandum, the co-operative community would serve four basic objectives. These were: first, creation of a spiritual and social comradeship; second, release of members from dependence on the capitalistic system; third, provision of a financial base providing some degree of self-sufficiency for the movement; and fourth, provision for mutual aid and sharing of burdens.[3]

The co-operative community envisioned by Farmer would have been based on a voluntary income tax and a network of interracial co-operatives returning a part of their dividends to Brotherhood Mobilization. For consumers there would have been interracial eating and housing cooperatives and for production there would have been cooperative farms and marketing of folk craft and art. For cooperative production Farmer mentioned specifically flax, wool and silk culture, as well as coal and wood carving, glass and gourd work and perhaps metal sculpturing. The utilitarian and artistic expression involved in such folk craft has a spiritual value, according to Farmer, and such crafts might eventually supplement industrialization by providing useful work for many poor whites and Negroes who were only marginally needed in an industrial economy.[1]

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[1] "Additional Memorandum from James Farmer," in Broderick and Meier, pp. 214-215.

[2] Freedom-When?, pp. 57-58.

[3] "Additional Memorandum," pp. 215-216.

In his memorandum, Farmer argued that such a cooperative community, to be meaningful, would have to draw on persons of the lower classes.[2] He contended that such an inclusion of the lower classes would be a merit as too many movements for racial justice were confined to the middle classes.[3] In general, support for Brotherhood Mobilization was to be drawn from labor, churches, schools, and civic and fraternal organizations.[4]

The fundamental aim of Brotherhood Mobilization, according to the second memorandum, was to establish racial brotherhood in the United States "as a fact as well as an ideal."[5] James Farmer argued that the goal must be radical:

> It must strive...not to make housing in ghettos more tolerable, but to destroy residential segregation: Not to make Jim Crow facilities the equal of others, but to abolish Jim Crow; not to make racial discrimination more bearable, but to wipe it out.[6]

The goal, and here Farmer quoted a statement of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Conference of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, was to "effectively repudiate every form of racism."[1]

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 217. [3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 219. [6] *Ibid.*

The FOR National Council meeting of April 11, 1942, endorsed James Farmer's proposals and called for development of an interracial movement to combat racial discrimination and injustice. This movement would rely largely on nonviolent direct action rather than indirect, political or legal methods. It would work closely with unions and it would stress organization of interracial cooperatives of various kinds. And it would be an autonomous body, not under the direction or leadership of FOR.[2]

The actual foundation of CORE, as recounted by James Farmer, was a fusion of the FOR group and a group of student activists of similar ideas. As Farmer describes it:

> The small interracial group of Chicago students who were to form the nucleus of CORE had independently evolved a similar idea. While I was drafting a memo, they had already begun formulating action projects. So that when I was authorized by FOR to set up a pilot project in Chicago, we had only to stretch out our hands to one another, and a movement was created.[3]

The Early Philosophy

The early CORE derived its philosophy premises from three main figures: Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi.[4] From the American, Thoreau, came the emphasis upon noncooperation with evil and the belief that an individual's actions should affect his destiny. From the Russian novelist, Tolstoy, a Christian pacifist, came the theory of passive nonresistance that dominated the American pacifist movement. And from the leader of the Indian drive for independence, Gandhi, came the techniques for turning the nonviolence of passive nonresistance into a militant weapon for change. Of the three men, Gandhi exerted the greatest influence upon CORE. As Farmer explains it:

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[1] Ibid.

[2] "Minutes of the F.O.R. National Council Meeting: April 11, 1942," in Broderick and Meier, pp. 219-221.

[3] Freedom-When?, p. 54.

[4] Farmer, "The New Jacobins and Full Emancipation," in Robert Goldwin, (ed.), 100 Years of Emancipation, (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1963), p. 90.

> ...most of us were American pacifists, accustomed to understanding nonviolence largely in Tolstoyan terms of non-resistance: the Christian injunction to love thine enemy and turn the other cheek; and non-cooperation: the peaceful refusal to obey unjust laws. But we were also militant pacifists, anxious to change the world, or at least our corner of it. Gandhi, whose assumptions about the power of love and righteousness resembled those of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, had nevertheless superimposed upon them a specific and viable program of action. This was what appealed to us, and we adopted it, at least in the beginning, to the letter.[1]

Gandhi had formulated a series of steps that should be followed in proper sequence in a nonviolent protest. These steps--investigation, negotiation, education, ultimatum, purification and direct action--were carefully followed by the early CORE.[2] The first step, investigation, entailed a careful study of all relevant facts. Once the facts were known, if injustice were found to exist, then an attempt would be made to negotiate in good faith and good will with the opposition. The avenue to negotiation was to be kept open even if the initial attempts to bargain failed. If negotiation failed or negotiations were refused, then an appeal to the public was made to inform them of the injustice and add their voices to the protest. If this education or agitation failed to remove the injustice, then an ultimatum was to be issued that listed again the demands of the movement and warned of direct action to come if these demands were not met. Should the ultimatum fail to produce results, then nonviolent direct action would be required, but prior to direct action one should come the self-discipline of ahimsa. To Gandhi this meant prayer and fasting, to CORE training in nonviolence and non-retaliation. The final step was nonviolent direct action. This according to James Farmer,

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[1] Freedom-When?, p. 55. [2] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

> . . . could range from a relatively simple picket line or protest march, through such various degrees of economic or political coercion as sit-ins, mass boycotts, or filling the jails, to the exteme measures, projected in Gahdhi's situation, of mass disobedience of state laws or mass resignation from public office in order to disable the government which he understood to be wrongfully in power.[1]

One part of Gandhi's doctrine that influenced CORE was the concept of satyagraha, variously translated "soul force" or "the truth which cannot be denied."[2] James Farmer remembers that: "We too, in the early years of CORE, believed that truth alone, the transparent justice of our demands, would convert the segregationists, once they agreed to listen."[3] And he adds: "Our own unshakable good will, which left no room in us for violence and helped us endure the violence of others, was the key with which we intended to unlock their hearts."[4] In retrospect, Farmer calls the early CORE "very young and idealistic."[5] He adds that in those days, "nonviolence was more than a method to us, it was a total way of life, filling us with love and flooding the world with the golden light of unlimited possibility."[6] The experience of determined and hostile resistance, sometimes coupled with violence, came later and modified the early view. As Farmer puts it: "What could we know about mass desperation, working as we did in small groups, in Northern cities, desegregating one restaurant or one movie house at a time?"[7]

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1. Ibid., p. 56.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 57.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 59.
7. Ibid., p. 57.

The Early Experience

Even before adoption of a name or formal organization, the group that made up the early CORE plunged into action.[1] Their first project was a test of the discrimination in housing that, by virtue of restrictive covenants, blanketed Chicago in 1942. The challenge was made by establishing an interracial cooperative house in a restricted area. The real estate company renting the house was not aware, at first, that Negroes were living there. Upon making this discovery, the company tried, by legal action, to evict members of the cooperative on the grounds that neighbors objected to the interracial cooperative.[2] Members of the cooperative called on the neighbors and outlined their position. The neighbors, though unenthusiastic about the presence of Negroes in the building, refused to testify for the prosecution, and the cooperative remained.[3] Farmer adds that the real estate firm was apparently afraid to test the legality of the restrictive covenants in court.[4]

The second focal point of the group was a segregated skating rink. Investigation revealed that whites were admitted to the rink without question while Negroes were turned away on the grounds that a private party was in progress. CORE was in doubt about the next step and finally decided to take the case to court. They lost the case.[5] Some six months later CORE, with assistance from CIO unions, picketed the rink and eventually forced the owners to negotiate. Within a short time the rink was completely desegregated.[6]

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1. Ibid., p. 58. 2. Ibid. 3. Ibid. 4. Ibid. 5. Ibid., p. 59.
6. Ibid.

James Farmer recalls that the early CORE followed Gandhi's outline of the proper sequence of nonviolent action quite carefully. He illustrates this by CORE's procedure in dealing with the Jack Sprat, an eating place located near the University of Chicago. By chance, Farmer had discovered that the Jack Sprat served Negroes only with the greatest reluctance and then with great rudeness.[1] The CORE group decided to act and consulted Gandhi's schedule. According to that schedule, the first step was to discover the facts. That had been done. The second was to attempt negotiation. Therefore two telephone calls were made to the manager. In each case he refused to discuss the situation. Then two letters were sent asking for a conference. No replies were received. Next four members went in person to talk with the manager. He refused to speak to them. Finally, another group was sent. It found a new manager, a woman, in charge. She explained that Negroes were refused service to prevent loss of white patronage. She refused to accept any of several suggested ways of testing the theory that serving Negroes would drive away whites.[2]

In Gandhi' formula, unsuccessful negotiations are followed by an ultimatum and, if necessary, by direct ation. The CORE group conformed to this pattern by writing still another letter to the management. This letter stated that if no reply were received in seven days action would be taken.[3] On the eighth day CORE acted. "In accordance with Gandhi's program, we . . . telephoned the police captain in advance, outlined the procedure we intended to follow, and even read him the state's civil rights law, with which he had apparently been unfamiliar."[4] Having prepared the way, CORE then "staged

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1. Ibid., p. 60.

2. Ibid., p. 61.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 62.

what I /Farmer/ believe to have been the first civil rights sit-in."[1] An interracial CORE group of about twenty-five entered the Jack Sprat at dinner time. The manager allowed the whites to be served but refused equal service for the Negroes who were offered service in the basement and later, after regular customers began leaving for lack of space, in two rear booths. When the CORE group refused service on this basis and refused to leave until served, the manager called the police to have those sitting-in ejected for disorderly conduct. When the police, who had been informed of CORE's plans, arrived they found no disorder and "when one of the officers phoned headquarters at the manager's insistence, he was told that nothing in the law allowed them to eject us."[2] Confronted with demonstrators who would not leave and police who would not act, the manager gave in and had the CORE members served. Later test groups were also served politely, and CORE's first sit-in, conducted according to Gandhi's formula, was a success.[3]

The evaluation of the Jack Sprat campaign by James Farmer reveals something about both the early and later CORE attitudes.

> When I look back at that first sit-in, I am amazed at our patience and good faith. We have traveled a great distance since then. No action group today would prolong the attempts at negotiation for more than a month before finally deciding to demonstrate. No militant Negro today would dream of trying to persuade a manager to serve him on the grounds that Negro patronage would not be bad for business. We have grown too proud for that. But in those days we were childishly literal-minded. We believed that people meant exactly what they said to us and heard exactly what we said to them. We regarded the sit-in as the successful culmination of a long campaign to reach the heart of the restaurant owner with the truth. What we took to be his conversion was as important to us as the fact that the restaurant had indeed been desegregated.[4]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 61.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 62.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] *Ibid*.

Expansion

The CORE actions in Chicago soon led to inquiries from interested groups elsewhere. Success encouraged imitation, and in June, 1943, groups from nine cities met in convention and formed a national organization dedicated "to eliminate all racial segregation and discrimination by means of interracial, non-violent direct action."[1] Affiliated chapters were required to accept the "CORE statement of Purpose" and an "Action Discipline."[2] James Farmer summarizes that discipline, which remained in effect into the mid-sixties, as follows:

> The action discipline pledged each member to maintain non-violence of word and deed, regardless of provocation; it demanded humility in the face of one's own inadequacy, and understanding and good will before the anger of opponents. It also enforced strict group discipline. All members had to obey the designated project leader. No one could withdraw from a project once he had agreed to participate in it unless he felt incapable of remaining non-violent, in which case he was to withdraw at once. The group, on the other hand, guaranteed each individual an important voice in all project planning and policymaking, and pledged to support him in any difficulty into which CORE activities might lead him.[3]

CORE grew slowly after that first national convention. When James Peck joined the all volunteer staff of CORE in March, 1949, the national director, George Houser, "was permitted to do some CORE work during his office hours with the Fellowship of Reconciliation."[4] George Houser later had to devote full time to another job in FOR and at that time James Peck took over administrative duties. He recalls that:

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[4] *Peck*, p. 33.

> I took over all CORE's office work. I also continued editing the CORElator, an assignment which Houser had given me soon after I started work with CORE. The Fellowship allowed CORE a little free office space after Houser left. I had a typewriter on the end of a shipping table, a file cabinet, and a couple shelves for address stencils. That was the CORE "office." Jim Robinson worked evenings raising the minimum funds needed for operating expenses, and Lula Farmer handled the treasurer's duties from her home. These were CORE's lean years. . . .[1]

Lean years, and yet there were notable CORE actions. One of the more dramatic in the early post-war period was the Journey of Reconciliation, a bus and train trip through the Upper South in the spring of 1947. Co-sponsored by FOR, it was designed to implement the Supreme Court's 1947 decision banning segregation in interstate travel.[2] The journey took two weeks to complete, going from Washington, D.C., through Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky and back through Virginia to Washington.[3] There were five arrests and one incident of violence, a single blow to James Peck's head in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.[4] Peck recalls that he simply asked the man, "what's the matter?" and, "He gave me a perplexed look and started to walk away awkwardly. My failure to retaliate with violence had taken him by surprise. I have found that the use of nonviolence in such situations often has this effect."[5] The five arrests led to one jail term, thirty days on the roads for Bayard Rustin, one of the originators of the idea of the trip.[6] Of the arrests, James Farmer reports that ". . . the NAACP, which was handling the legal end, eventually dropped the case in favor of another which, in their experienced judgment, they considered legally sounder."[7]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Freedom-When?, p. 64.

[3] Peck, p. 13.

[4] Ibid., p. 16.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 12.

[7] Freedom-When?, p. 64.

The results of the journey were disappointing. For one thing, it did not gain wide publicity to dramatize the injustice or the movement protesting it. As James Peck puts it: ". . . there were no reporters flocking around us to ask whether it had been worthwhile."[1] For another, it did not produce an immediate change in the pattern of discrimination in interstate travel. As Peck summarizes its effect: "We realized that our Journey had not prompted Negroes to flock immediately to front seats on Southern buses. But we hoped that a few Negroes would act as a result of the example we had set and that the desegregation process would thus get slowly under way."[2] James Farmer remembers that the Journey did lead to consideration of a campaign in the South, but the time was not considered right and the idea was discarded:

> Inspired by the Journey, CORE seriously considered making a major effort in the South, not only to create new CORE chapters, but to instigate a large-scale direct-action movement attempting the desegregation of lunch counters, restaurants, and other places of public accommodation. Finally, after much debate we abandoned the idea. With our limited vision, we could not see any prospect of success. It seemed to us that the time was not right, the people were not ready, and any such move would only arouse a type of opposition which would ultimately destroy the cause of non-violence.[3]

The leadership of CORE decided against a campaign in the South in 1947, but they did launch a campaign against the Palisades Amusement Park in New Jersey to gain admittance to its swimming pool for Negroes. The campaign lasted two summers, 1947 and 1948, and was marked by many of the techniques of resistance later encountered in the Deep South. Police and park guards, for example, resorted to arrests and brutal treatment of the demonstrators. James Peck remembers that: "It got so that each Sunday when we went to Palisades we knew in advance that we would be beaten, arrested, or

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1. Peck, p. 21.
2. Ibid.
3. Freedom-When?, pp. 64-65.

both."[1] In his own case, Peck was handled roughly and beaten on a number of occasions. Two will serve as examples. On August 3, 1947, Peck was seized by police and held while a guard beat him. Peck suffered a fractured rib and a deep cut over the left eye.[2] On the following Sunday Peck was back, only to have a police officer spit in his face and a park guard knock him unconscious. He awoke with a broken jaw.[3] But park authorities used subterfuge as well as violence and effectively limited admission to white only by making the pool into a private club. Pames Peck describes the ruse:

> Whereas a white would be admitted to the pool if he bought an admission ticket, a Negro would be told he had to join the club. If he pursued the matter further, he would be instructed to go to the administration building and fill out an application blank. If he took this step he would be told that he would get word by mail regarding his application. Of course, no word from the Palisades was forthcoming. We knew, because a couple of our group had gone through these futile motions.[4]

CORE picketed the Palisades through two summers, but it also took legal action. As a result:

> All our convictions arising from the 1947 arrests were either reversed by the higher courts or dropped. Civil rights suits against the park were initiated in both state and federal courts. From the federal suit resulted a precedent-setting civil rights decision by the Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia, namely, that the sale of tickets constitutes a contract and that, constitutionally, a Negro must have the same right to make a contract as does a white.[5]

In Peck's opinion, inclusion of swimming pools in the 1949 New Jersey civil rights act and enactment of that act into law stemmed in part from Palisades related testimony before the legislative committee. Also important in gaining enactment of that law, in Peck's view, were "the news stories and editorials which had appeared in northern New Jersey newspapers during the summer of our beatings and arrests."[1]

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[1] Peck, p. 24.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] *Ibid*., pp. 24-25.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 25.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 27.

Legal and legislative action led the park to admit Negroes to the swimming pool throughout the summers of 1949 and 1950. But in 1951 only Negroes recognized as CORE members were being admitted, so CORE took further action. Early in the summer of 1952 four CORE members who had been refused admission filed suit against the park. That led to a re-opening of the park pool to Negroes and since that time CORE tests have shown no further violations.[2]

In many ways the CORE campaign against the Palisades Park was typical of what was to follow in the nonviolent movement. Conducted nonviolently, it brought forth both violence and subterfuge. Having apparently won a victory, it found that the victory was of temporary duration unless carefully guarded. Finally, and significantly, the victory, though indirectly attributable to nonviolent action, was more directly the product of the resulting legal and legislative action. It certainly was not the result of a direct moral conversion of the management of the park.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's the number of CORE chapters decreased considerably.[3] Nevertheless, major CORE campaigns were begun in St. Louis and Baltimore, the former in 1949 and the latter in 1953.[4] Before those campaigns Negroes in those cities were served in restaurants and eating places only in the Negro ghettos and at railway stations, but "when St. Louis CORE ended its campaign in 1953 and Baltimore CORE in 1954, all downtown dime stores in the two cities served everybody, regardless of color, at their lunch counters."[5] James Peck adds that: "Once the dime stores' policy was

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1. Ibid. 2. Ibid., pp. 27-28. 3. Peck, p. 33. 4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

changed, CORE found it less difficult to get drugstores, cafeterias, and department-store restaurants to end discrimination."[1]

The Baltimore and St. Louis campaigns demonstrated CORE's ability to desegregate restaurants and lunch-counters through sit-ins and other forms of nonviolent action. Moreover, the gains preceded the public accommodations portion of the 1964 civil rights act by more than a decade. On the other hand, the gains were slow in coming, five years of effort being required in St. Louis, and the campaigns neither greatly altered the position of many Negroes nor started a nation-wide movement of reform. In sum, the gains were real, but they were slow in coming and localized in effect.

CORE: 1942-1956

CORE successfully pioneered in nonviolent direct action in the years 1942-1956. Its primary target in these years, discrimination in public accommodations, proved vulnerable to determined and disciplined nonviolent protest, and various CORE action groups were able to end discrimination in "theaters, amusement parks, swimming pools, barber shops, hotels, motels, drive-ins, bowling alleys, skating rinks, playgrounds, and YMCA's."[2] In some cases, the effects of a campaign were city-wide, as in St. Louis and Baltimore in the early 1950's, or even state-wide, if the campaign against the Palisades Amusement Park is given credit for the legal rulings and legislative enactment of a civil rights act in New Jersey. And yet the CORE campaigns produced only limited results. They set no great tide in motion and they gained no mass support. In the fourteen years of its existence, CORE had failed to produce either the nation-wide campaign against discrimination or the co-operative community envisioned by James Farmer and the other founders of the organization. CORE's victories were, in the main, isolated and local.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 35.

James Farmer, author of the two memoranda on Brotherhood Mobilization that laid the theoretical foundation for CORE, has summarized the nature of the organization in the period before 1956 as follows:

> We were small, Northern, middle-class, elitist, idealistic, and predominantly white. We had not yet heard the voice of the masses. Nor, for that matter, had many people heard us. Until 1956 we survived entirely as a volunteer organization to which we were all able to give only part of our time. We had no budget to speak of and no organized publicity. The Fellowship of Reconciliation still contained a number of the kind of pacifists who were embarrassed by any organized aggressiveness, even though non-violent. Our affiliation with the FOR and our own lingering idealism engendered in us the feeling that anything so self-conscious and worldly as a budget, so self-assertive as public relations, was somehow immoral. From the vantage point of today's massive militance, we can see that it was our attitude that was immoral. But at that time we had no way of predicting today's Revolution and no one to teach us to think in grander terms.[1]

The Effect of Montgomery

CORE had practiced nonviolent protest on the Gandhian model for fourteen years but hardly anyone knew it.[2] Then, in 1956, the Montgomery bus boycott and Martin Luther King burst into the public consciousness and suddenly everyone had heard of nonviolence. James Farmer generously admits the role of Montgomery: "The Montgomery bus boycott came in 1956, suddenly and with the force of a revelation. It was a spontaneous, mass, non-violent demonstration that neither we nor anyone else had thought likely. It astounded

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1. *Freedom-When?*, p. 65.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 65, and Peck, p. 47.

the country."[1] And, speaking of Dr. King, James Farmer adds that he:

> ...burst upon the scene with something of the Gandhian charisma. The Negroes of Montgomery responded to his call for a boycott with a total commitment and tremendous personal fortitude. The efficiency with which they rearranged their lives and the stoicism with which they endured the attendant physical hardships commanded universal admiration and aroused in thousand of Negro hearts hitherto undreamed-of possibilities of action.[2]

And Farmer concludes: "Non-violent direct action, which we had been practicing in small, unpublicized groups for fourteen years, became almost overnight a nationally admired phenomenon."[3]

But the civil rights movement failed to capitalize on the publicity and support developed by the Montgomery movement. James Peck remembers that: "Civil rights optimists had hoped that the successful Montgomery bus boycott would spark similar nonviolent mass protests led by Martin Luther King, who as Montgomery leader had become a symbol of Gandhi-ism in action."[4] Instead, "The nationwide publicity about Montgomery, which had acquainted many newspaper readers throughout the country for the first time with terms such as 'nonviolence' and 'passive resistance', subsided."[5]

Nonviolence faded from public attention, and the reading public "still did not know of the existence of CORE,"[6] but the organization began to prepare for a more active role. During the Montgomery boycott "...CORE was in such financial straits that it could give only moral support to Montgomery,"[7] though it did manage to send 150 dollars to a less publicized boycott in Tallahassee.[8] Still, in 1956, CORE: "set up an office of its own--not much bigger than a closet--and I [Peck] left my shipping table at the Fellowship

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1. Freedom-When?, pp. 65-66. 2. Ibid., p. 66.

3. Ibid. 4. Peck, p. 47. 5. Ibid. 6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., p. 44. 8. Ibid.

office to move there. Soon thereafter, Jim Robinson quit his proofreading to take a job in the CORE office. Next, CORE hired its first field secretary."[1] CORE had begun to prepare for a broad effort.

The Sit-ins--and CORE

The Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-1956 had acquainted the public with mass nonviolent action, but that campaign was not followed up for three years. Then in February, 1960, four Negro college students sat-in at a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Reaction was immediate and students were soon sitting-in all over the South. As James Peck puts it: "The technique in which CORE had pioneered without publicity for eighteen years had finally become daily nationwide news copy."[2] Though it was the students with their nearly spontaneous protest who finally made nonviolent direct action a continuing and major part of the Negro protest, CORE was ready and played a significant role in terms of publicity, advice, training and organization. James Farmer, discussing CORE's participation, states that: "The students had called on us for assistance. Within a matter of days CORE...was hard at work, organizing more sit-ins in the South, mobilizing Northern support, setting up workshops to train demonstrators from both regions in the techniques and discipline of nonviolence."[3] And James Peck remembers that:

> Paid staff members--now four--answered endless long-distance phone calls, many from Southern student leaders wanting CORE to send down a field secretary, to bail out arrested students, or simply to give strategy advice on sit-ins, picketing, and so on. Reporters frequented the office daily, seeking interviews with Southern students whom CORE would bring North

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 47. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 56. [3] *Freedom-When?*, pp. 66-67.

to tell their stories on radio and TV and at big public meetings.[1]

The student use of nonviolence had both an internal and an external effect, according to James Farmer. Internally, the "Tens of thousands" of young Negro demonstrators "began to experience the joys of action and the liberating effect of working on behalf of their own destiny. They began to regard themselves differently."[2] And externally, the nonviolent sit-ins portrayed the Negro in a new and more favorable light:

> Newspaper and television accounts of the sit-ins suggested a picture which reversed the common sterotypes. Inside, at the lunch counters, sat well-dressed, well-mannered Negro college students with their calculus and philosophy books, quietly asking for a cup of coffee; outside, crowds of white boys with duck-tail haircuts and leather jackets grinned and shuffled their feet and tried to start trouble.[3]

CORE, having pioneered in nonviolence, aided and advised the students in their sit-ins. But CORE studied as well as advised with the result that "the sit-ins taught us much about the nature of the revolution. The mass movement of which we had hardly dared to dream in our days of youthful idealism was now becoming a reality."[4] But the transformation of the protest into a mass movement placed new demands on CORE and led to changes in its tactics and organization:

> If CORE was to continue in a position of significance and authority, we would have to learn to embrace these masses of willing revolutionaries. No longer could we indulge in the luxury of the perfectly designed, perfectly executed action project, in which each individual had a voice in every step of the planning and all the demonstrators were steeped in the philosophy and tactics and discipline of non-violence.[5]

Organizationally, James Farmer argues that achievement of nation-wide protest meant that local chapters would have to give up some of their autonomy so that CORE could plan, co-ordinate, and act effectively and speedily.

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[1] Peck, p. 56.

[2] Freedom-When?, p. 67.

[3] Ibid., pp. 67-68.

[4] Ibid., p. 68.

[5] Ibid., pp. 68-69.

This meant, he added, that the referendums upon all actions had to be dropped.[1] And he concluded: "The challenging task confronting CORE and all the other civil rights organizations was that of giving a certain amount of direction to the movement and imposing upon it the control of non-violence, without inhibiting the spontaneity or self-expression of thousands of newly aroused Negroes."[2]

CORE Regains the Lead: The Freedom Rides

The student sit-ins, indebted to both King and CORE, took the lead and established nonviolence as the heart of the Negro protest movement in 1960. In the spring and summer of 1961 CORE, the pioneer in nonviolence, regained a position of leadership by its spectacular and effective "freedom rides." The first "freedom ride" of 1961 was closely related in two ways to the "Journey of Reconciliation" co-sponsored by CORE and FOR in 1947. First, both were designed to test and implement a Supreme Court decision. The earlier decision in the Irene Morgan case in 1947 had outlawed segregation aboard buses in interstate travel; the decision in the Bruce Boynton case in December, 1960, extended the prohibition against discrimination to include related facilities used by interstate travelers. Second, the initial concept of a test by a small and disciplined interracial group was the same. In 1947 sixteen people undertook the journey; in 1961 an even smaller group of thirteen volunteers prepared to test the federal ruling.[3] But there were differences also. For one thing, the 1947 journey was limited to states on the

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1. Ibid., p. 69. 2. Ibid. 3. Ibid., pp. 64 and 69.

upper rim of the South; the 1961 Freedom route was Washington to New Orleans --a trip through the center of the Deep South.[1] And there was a difference in those participating: in 1947 many of the riders were pacifists; in 1961 most weren't.[2]

The initial goal of the 1961 Freedom Ride was to precipitate federal intervention. As Farmer explains it: "Our intention was to provoke the Southern authorities into arresting us and thereby prod the Justice Department into enforcing the law of the land."[3] At least two things should be noted about this stated goal: first, its intent was to end segregation by bringing the coercive power of the federal government into play--not by converting the opponent with moral persuasion; second, to bring federal intervention, the Southern authorities were deliberately provoked. In sum, nonviolence was consciously employed as a political weapon designed to have political consequences.

The initial plan called for a few volunteers to provoke arrest and thereby force federal intervention. But events forced a change in the nature of the rides. One bus burned in Anniston, Alabama, and riders of another were brutally beaten, apparently with the tacit consent of local authorities, amid the full glare of national publicity.[4] The result of the brutality was a shocked nation, and hundreds of volunteers came forward to join the Freedom Rides. The reaction of CORE to this flood of volunteets is explained by James Farmer. "If we had refused these people, they would have come anyway. The best we could do under the circumstances was to funnel them through checkpoints in Chicago and New Orleans, desperately trying to keep track of every-

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1. Peck, pp. 88-89. 2. Ibid., pp. 12 and 89.

3. Freedom-When?, p. 69. 4. Peck, pp. 96-97.

one and put them through an intensive one or two-day training session in the methods of non-violence."[1] CORE gave the volunteers minimal training and incorporated them in its plans. But the very numbers of volunteers led to a transformation in the nature of CORE's plans. As James Farmer puts it:

> The sheer weight of all these numbers shifted our original emphasis and made of the Freedom Rides a different and far grander thing than we had intended them to be. Instead of seeking token arrests to spur legal and administrative action, we began to fill the jails of Mississippi--a Gandhian tactic aimed at making segregation practices so expensive and inconvenient as to become unfeasible.[2]

But there were flaws in the technique. For one thing: "No real effort was made, either in advance or simultaneously, to mobilize the Negro populace for support in towns along the route. As a result, the attempt to use a Gandhian 'fill the jails' device, relying upon people who had to travel to reach the point of contact, became, through prohibitive expense, somewhat abortive."[3] Two other errors compounded the difficulties with the tactic. First, most riders posted bond rather than serving their full terms, which meant that after a few weeks people were leaving jail faster than others were entering. Second, the technique allowed Mississippi to place an enormous financial burden on the movement by its escalation of cash bond requirements.[4] But the fundamental flaw in the tactic may be even simpler. James Farmer explains: "We never did manage to fill the jails completely; I think that Southern cities and states have almost unlimited jail facilities, and if they don't, they can quickly improvise more."[5]

The attempt to fill the jails of Mississippi failed, but the Freedom

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[1] Freedom-When?, p. 70.

[2] Ibid.

[3] "The New Jacobins," p. 93.

[4] Ibid., pp. 94-95.

[5] Freedom-When?, p. 72.

Rides succeeded. The brutal response of segregationists and some Southern authorities to an attempt to exercise lawful rights outraged the nation and forced the federal intervention that had been the original goal.

> Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who had urgently advised the first group to discontinue the rides at Montgomery, requested from the Interstate Commerce Commission an order banning segregation in seating on interstate buses and outlawing racial discrimination in bus terminal facilities used by interstate passengers.[1]

Lessons of the Freedom Rides

The pattern of the Freedom Rides--a challenge leading to a crisis that resulted in a forward movement--has become the basic model for non-violent advance. James Farmer argues that the Freedom Rides "helped to clarify the role of creative conflict and tension in non-violent struggle. We learned . . . that no such entrenched order as our national system of segregation ever gives way without conflict."[2] And Farmer cites the words of Frederick Douglass:

> Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. . . . The struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will.[3]

The drama of the Freedom Rides and their brutal repression produced waves of sympathy and agitated support all over the nation. And this support was utilized by CORE. As Farmer puts it: "We learned from the triumphs of the Freedom Rides to channel that turbulence into massive demonstrations and jail-ins, involving thousands, not hundreds, of Negroes."[4] And to get those

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

CORE learned "to use local citizens in our demonstrations and to mobilize the local Negro communities."[1]

The Freedom Rides of 1961 were followed by CORE's Freedom Highways campaign of 1962. Groups crossed the country testing accommodations in hotels and motels--the Howard Johnson and Holiday Inn chains were particularly singled out--and, with the aid of sympathy boycotts, by "the end of 1962 a Negro could drive along the national highways and know that when he was hungry or tired, there would be a place where he would be welcome to stop and rest."[2]

Ends and Means: A Merger

One lesson of the Freedom Rides--that protest is most effective when it gains mass involvement--was applied in Albany, Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama. Farmer reports that:

> It remained for Birmingham and, before that, its dress rehearsal, Albany, Georgia, to learn from the Freedom Rides' mistakes, and launch massive demonstrations and jail-ins, wholly involving thousands, not hundreds, of Negroes--local citizens, not transients--and mobilizing the respective Negro communities *in toto*. A score of Birminghams followed the first. Birmingham thus set the stage for a full-scale revolt against segregation in this nation.[3]

A mass protest, such as the Birmingham protest, "was possible," according to Farmer, "because of the magic name of Martin Luther King, Jr. It was possible in a more basic sense, because of an historical merger of two social forces."[4] These forces, both bred by World War II if Farmer is correct, were:

". . . the means-oriented idealists of pacifistic turn of mind, for whom

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1. *Ibid.* 2. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

3. "The New Jacobins," pp. 94-95.

> non-violence was a total philosophy, a way of life--we had founded CORE; and the ends-oriented militants, the New Jacobins, disillusioned with America's rhetoric of equality, who saw in direct action a useful weapon and viewed non-violence only as a tactic.[1]

And Farmer argues that both groups are necessary for social revolution. Without the angry masses, who are not committed to nonviolence as a way of life, the idealists "would have remained largely irrelevant and would have gone on talking to themselves and whispering through an occasional keyhole to another human heart."[2] But the anger of the masses "without the disciplined idealism of the other could have produced only nihilism."[3] And each, in Farmer's view, has a lesson for the other: "The idealists warn that the ends do not justify the means, and the militants assert with equal validity that means are worthless which do not achieve substantial reform."[4] Near the end of his tenure as National Director of CORE James Farmer assessed the role of nonviolence in CORE:

> Today, non-violence is neither a mere tactic which may be dropped on any occasion nor an inviolable spiritual commitment. It is somewhere between the two--not a philosophy, not a tactic, but a strategy involving both philosophical and tactical elements, in a massive and widening direct-action campaign to redeem the American promise of full freedom for the Negro.[5]

Mass Protest and Discipline

During the period that James Farmer led CORE there was a change in strategy from carefully disciplined protest led by a few idealists to mass protest involving whole communities. This change brought with it the problem of imposing discipline upon the newly involved masses. Without that discipline, mass protest would degenerate upon provocation into violence, and, in Farmer's words: "Widespread violence by the freedom fighters would sever from the struggle all but a few of our allies. It would also provoke and, to many, justify such repressive measures as would injure the movement."[1] In addition, a turn to violence would do internal damage to CORE by alienating its nonviolent activists.[2] In the end, Farmer concludes, a turn to violence would benefit only "the defenders of segregation and perhaps the more bellicose of the black nationalist groups."[3]

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[1] *Freedom-When?*, p. 77.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 78.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*

The Negro protest movement, to be successful, must remain nonviolent, if James Farmer is correct. But there is a difficulty in maintaining disciplined nonviolence in a mass movement. That difficulty is that the masses are not committed to nonviolence. In James Farmer's opinion:

> It is only the leaders, members, and close associates of the non-violent movement who accept it in any way as an integral part of the struggle. The masses who now join picket lines and sit-ins and protest marches share only a new-found willingness to become individually physically involved and to risk suffering or jail for common goals.[4]

In this view, the masses are united in their opposition to the injustice that sits heavily on them, but they are not united to nonviolence "as a strategy or a tactic or anything else."[5] Farmer describes the new participants in protest and their motivations as follows: "They come from the pool halls and taverns as well as churches, from the ranks of the unemployed and the alienated and the rootless. They are not yet wedded to non-violence: they are wedded, indeed, only to their own fierce indignation."[6]

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 79. 2. *Ibid.* 3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 78. 5. *Ibid.* 6. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

The problem of discipline could be solved by ending mass participation in the movement. But Farmer argues that halting the mass demonstrations would be a mistake: "The entire Negro community wants now, more than ever before, to become directly involved in the 'revolution.' Either they will be involved or they will, by their separation from it, brand the movement as counterfeit and ultimately destroy it."[1] The correct answer, in Farmer's view, is not an end to mass involvement, but "tighter discipline within the ranks and trained monitors to police the lines."[2] To gain discipline, "the need is for rapid expansion of training for nonviolence in the ranks--classes, institutes, workshops--in every city where the struggle is in process or in preparation."[3] Once the demonstrations begin, there must be "a specially trained cadre of monitors . . . to spot trouble before it occurs and either resolve it or isolate it."[4]

Inappropriate Standards

In the mid-1960's, writing from his vantage point as National Director, James Farmer found a basic flaw in the early vision of CORE. He noted that in its early years most members of the organization had been either Christian pacifists or Gandhians or both, and consequently they had placed great emphasis upon individual persuasion and moral conversion as the means to establish a just society.[5] But, in the light of more than twenty years' experience, Farmer argues that the early emphasis on purity of means

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1. "The New Jacobins," p. 96.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Freedom-When?*, p. 55.

and motives, upon change by persuasion and moral conversion, was in some respects incorrect and inappropriate:

> The original CORE vision was excessively interpersonal and private. There was not men nor time nor spirit enough to change each lunch-counter-owner's heart, one by one. As we learned when we finally met them, our people did not wish to wait that long, and _out of love for them_ we did not wish them to.[1]

James Farmer criticizes the "excessively interpersonal and private" vision of the early CORE because its insistence upon purity of technique was purchased by needlessly prolonging the suffering of the innocent. That suffering was needless, he argues, because CORE had found that injustice can be removed without waiting until each oppressor is converted. "We learned . . . that before the millennium we could at least alter behavior _and conditions_ which created injustice."[2] In the new CORE, altered in its nature by mass participation of people who were neither pacifists nor Gandhians, there was less emphasis upon love and conversion and more on immediate justice, even if the opponent's moral conversion was incomplete.[3]

Critics, noting the change in tone of CORE pronouncements and actions, charged that: ". . . in becoming a mass movement, it fatally compromised its principles. A cadre of lovers became an army of haters."[4] James Farmer rejected the charge, pointing out that it was the earlier standards that were inappropriate because those standards sacrificed innocent victims for pure but relatively slow and ineffective protest, and he insisted: ". . . we do not hate; far from it. We are not the paragons of love we once were, to be sure, but we do not hate."[5] And he added:

> . . . we have not experienced the changes which have taken place in CORE as a compromise or even, as is otherwise alleged, as

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 80.

[2] _Ibid._

[3] _Ibid._, pp. 78-79.

[4] _Ibid._, p. 79

[5] _Ibid._

> revolutionary necessity. We have changed but only because we have learned from the experience of over twenty years that the world is more complex than had imagined and the techniques and motives necessary to change it more varied and larger in scope than we had ever dreamed.[1]

Comparing the early CORE and CORE under his leadership, James Farmer said: "We dreamed of a better America and still we dream. To desist from working for that dream out of loyalty to an idea of CORE which in some ways was proven ineffectual would be the real compromise. We have learned from the Jacobins. Today we are all Jacobins."[2]

The Oppressed Must Win Their Own Freedom

The early vision of CORE may have been flawed, but in James Farmer's words: "One CORE principle has remained unaltered from the first. We believed and we believe that men must achieve freedom for themselves. Do it for them and you extinguish the spark which makes freedom possible and glorious."[3] In this view, CORE was right to emphasize action by the oppressed for their rights, and the change into a mass movement merely spreads the essential benefits of participation. Thus Farmer argues that:

> The masses of Negroes who are now involved in the movement have achieved a measure of spiritual emancipation with which Lincoln's Proclamation could not possibly have endowed them. . . . They are no longer chained to the ancient sterotypes. They do not feel inferior and do not believe that they are; they are no longer comfortable in the confines of the caste. We feel dignified. We are dignified.[4]

Participation by Negroes in the movement for Negro riots has given them, according to Farmer, "a great and burgeoning sense of individual worth."[5]

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1. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

He explains this new sense of worth in the following way:

> The average American, or for that matter the average man in any industrial society, feels submerged, powerless, a cog in a giant machine. But in his revolution the individual Negro has found a new meaning for himself. People formerly little and insignificant now, in their own eyes, stand ten feet tall. As one student in Atlanta put it: "I, myself, desegregated that lunch counter on Peachtree Street. Nobody else. I did it by sitting-in, by walking the picket line, by marching. I didn't have to wait for any big shots to do it for me. I did it myself." Never again will that youth and the many like him see themselves as unimportant.[1]

Continuity and Change in CORE

The central elements of CORE's early vision were an insistence upon noncooperation with evil and discipline nonviolent protest. Those elements were still regarded as valid while James Farmer was National Director. But change, too, had occured. Small individual actions gave way to mass protest and the involvement of the ends-oriented masses resulted in greater emphasis upon speedy results and less on purity of motive and justice by moral conversion of the opponents. And yet the movement, despite these changes, remained nonviolent. As James Farmer puts it:

> We recall our dreams of creative reconciliation and feel we serve them still, in our manner. But love is a luxurious tactic and the realities of militant non-violence permit us few luxuries. We are non-violent because non-violence is a weapon tested out and proven effective. Prudence, tactical good sense, and our ideals demand that we remain so.[2]

Nonviolence, then, remains possible as an ideal and a standard because it is effective in producing results. This point was stressed by Marvin Rich, Community Relations Director of CORE in 1965.

> And the American people have responded--reluctantly, slowly, hesitatingly --but they have responded. When forced to make a choice between making

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

> a mockery of the American creed and making it a reality they have chosen the course of equality. ... We in CORE believe that when forced to make a choice, they will continue to make a choice for progress.[1]

Implicit in the statements of Farmer and Rich is the premise that if nonviolence were to prove ineffective, it could no longer command support as the standard of the movement. It is possible to sell nonviolence to the masses because it works; therefore to maintain that standard it must continue to work. The same point, it may be added, has been made by Dr. King.[2]

Racial Attitudes in CORE: 1942-1965

The original attitude of CORE was that race was totally irrelevant, that racial consciousness should disappear entirely. Farmer illustrates the attitude by recalling a white CORE worker, a young lady, who was mugged by a black assailant. She gave a detailed description to the police, omitting only the vital fact that he was black.[3] Farmer says that: "This young lady was a true child of the 'old' CORE. No organization was so aggressively color-blind, so ideologically committed to the utter irrelevance of race, as we."[4] The old CORE held that once the races came to know each other there would be no reason to note a man's race.[5] And they laughed, Farmer remembers, at the reply of the little boy to his mother when she became suspicious and asked about his new friend: "'Now, is Johnny white or colored?' And the boy replied, 'Well, I don't know. I'll have to go back tomorrow and look and see.'"[6]

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1. Marvin Rich, "The Congress of Racial Equality and Its Strategy," p. 116, in *The Annals*, 357 (January, 1965), 113-118.

2. "Negroes Are Not Moving Too Fast,", p. 9

3. *Freedom-When?*, p. 85. 4. *Ibid*. 5. *Ibid*. 6. *Ibid*., pp. 85-86.

But CORE's attitude has changed, Farmer notes, and "We have found the cult of color-blindness not only quaintly irrelevant but seriously flawed."[1]

> . . . we learned that America simply couldn't _be_ color-blind. It would have to _become_ color-blind and it would only _become_ color-blind when _we_ gave up our color. The white man, who presumably has no color, would have to give up only his prejudices. We would have to give up our identities. Thus, we would usher in the Great Day with an act of complete self-denial and self-abasement.[2]

The cult of color-blindness, as Farmer refers to the racial attitude of the early CORE, is held to be defective because it robs the Negro of his identity as the price of equal treatment. It was, Farmer argues, an admission of the racist charge that "our skins were an affliction; that our history is one long humiliation; that we are empty of distinctive traditions and any legitimate source of pride."[3] And this "cult of color-blindness" was being urged on Negroes "_at the very moment_ when the movement was teaching us to love ourselves, and making the name Negro a name to conjure with."[4]

James Farmer states that the newer CORE attitude toward race was one of pride--of pride in color, of pride in Negro accomplishments, or pride in Negro identity. This pride, he argued, stemmed from the discovery of Negro history and heroes: Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois.[5] It was increased by a new sense of brotherhood among "black men all over the world who were engaged in efforts parallel to our own, calling us brother and asking us to call them brother."[6] And it found its culmination in the Negro protest movement:

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 87.

[2] _Ibid_. The thesis implied is that it is inadequate for the Negro to be simply an American. He must be some kind of American--a colored American. Though color is substituted for religion, note the parallel to the phenomenon described in Will Herbert, _Protestant-Catholic-Jew_: _An Essay in American Religious Sociology_ (Revised edition; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1960).

[3] _Freedom When?_, p. 87.

[4] _Ibid_.

[5] _Ibid_. A partial list.

[6] _Ibid_.

> In the movement we found an identity. Was that not jealousy we spotted in the eager eyes of white youths who flocked to our cause knowing that our efforts constituted the most significant activity in all of America; that we were making American history, fulfilling America's inner purpose, knowing that America could not be free and equal if we did not make a name for ourselves. . . .[1]

CORE Becomes a Negro Organization

Accompanying the change in racial attitudes from "race is irrelevant" to racial pride was a transformation of the nature of CORE itself. As James Farmer puts it: "In the last four years CORE has ceased simply serving Negroes and has become a Negro organization."[2] This change, he added, produced racial conflict within CORE.

> . . . we have begun to hear reports of strife between nationalists and integrationists in CORE chapters all over the country. This usually means strife between blacks and whites--but not always. The lines are not strictly drawn: some of our white members are rabid black nationalists.[3]

The change did not mean that whites were excluded from membership in CORE; it did mean that they were increasingly excluded from leadership positions. The rationale for this exclusion, in Farmer's formulation, was that whites had in other civil rights organizations used their money or positions to dominate the policy of those organizations and:

> The evil of slavery (and to some degree Negroes are still enslaved) is in the way it permitted white men to handle Negroes--their bodies, their actions, their opportunities, their very minds and thoughts. To the very depths of their souls Negroes feel handled, dealt with, ordered about, manipulated--by white men.[4]

Originally CORE was conceived as an interracial organization working for a universalized goal--racial justice. Now it became more narrowly conceived as a Negro organization working for justice for Negroes and operating in a manner designed to produce psychological benefits for Negroes. Farmer, in explaining the change, said: "So, as Negroes began to sense that the civil rights movement was their movement, an instrument for their self-expression, their freedom (in addition to being a vehicle for universal ideals), it became more difficult to convince them that once again they must be led by whites."[1] And in fact, he argued, they refused to be so led. Farmer cites the case of Alan Gartner, "a brilliant and utterly dedicated white man," who sought the national chairmanship of CORE.[2] He had worked hard for Core, he was the choice of the outgoing chairman, Charles Oldham, also a white, "But I /Farmer/ knew that at that stage of our struggle he could not be chairman, and that if he ran, the convention would not only defeat him but might turn from the really able Negroes available to a rabid racist. . . ."[3] To avoid a divisive floor fight and the choice that might follow it, Farmer gathered the staff and told Mr. Gartner that "if he insisted on running, I would fight him on the floor of the convention."[4] Farmer reports that: "We argued painfully and tearfully for hours. What of CORE's principles of interracialism and color-blindness? . . . 'Why can't he run? Is he competent or isn't he?' 'There are other competent men.' Well, Mr. Gartner agreed not to run and a floor fight was averted."[5] Floyd McKissick, who was to succeed Farmer as National Director of CORE, was nominated and won by acclamation.[6] Farmer defends the decision, "but I was personally saddened by the cost. . . . For, no doubt, we had denied this man categorically, because of his color, and this was not at all like us."[7]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 87-88.

[2] Ibid., p. 88.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 89.

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[1] *Ibid*. [2] *Ibid*., p. 90. [3] *Ibid*. [4] *Ibid*., p. 90.

[5] *Ibid*. [6] *Ibid*. [7] *Ibid*.

In 1965 James Farmer argued that CORE should be neither wholly nationalistic nor integrationist. He defended the view by arguing that:

> The doctrinaire color-blind often fail to perceive that it is ideally necessary for the black man to be proudly black today. And the black nationalists, for their part, often do not see that it is only realistic to maintain touch with white people, for we cannot live in our dreams nor carve a nations for ourselves in our mind's eye alone.[1]

The new CORE, in Farmer's view, become color-conscious rather than color-blind, and the nature of that consciousness was pride.[2] The new "mood ebony" stemmed from three causes, according to Farmer. The first, which he found ironic, was that: "each achievement of the civil rights movement aimed at making color irrelevant counted to us as a Negro achievement, earned by Negro effort... and it became a source of great pride."[3] A second factor in CORE's new emphasis upon racial pride is related to its attempt to reach the Negro masses. There was, as James Farmer puts it, recognition that: "The integration-which-would-end-in-assimilation has never been a prime goal of the Negro masses... In the past the men who have prodded the average Negro into active response have always--like the fabled Marcus Garvey--emphasized race and adopted some form of nationalism."[4] The lesson derived was that CORE, if it was to appeal to the Negro ghetto, must appeal to racial pride. The third factor accounting for CORE's new emphasis on color was the influence of black-nationalist groups.[5]

Black-Nationalist Influence on CORE

Black-nationalists argue that there is a problem of black identity because whites, in order to dominate blacks, stripped the Negro of a knowledge of his past, debased him, gave him the white man's religion, and taught him to hate himself.[1] The white man left the Negro, as Farmer summarizes the nationalist position, "without a name or any claim to fame . . . without suitable memories and a suitable self-definition."[2] The nationalist solution to the problem of Negro identity is to tell the Negro "that he is somebody and that his salvation depends upon the proud acceptance of his own blackness."[3] James Farmer states that: "There are very few Negroes who are not moved by this rudimentary appeal."[4] And he adds that the appeal to racial pride works. As Farmer puts it, black-nationalists "succeeded, as no one else, in eliminating narcotics addiction, prostitution, juvenile delinquency among their numbers . . ."[5] and they implanted in their members "almost puritanical standards of sexual and personal morality."[6]

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[1] Ibid., p. 91. [2] Ibid., p. 92. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid. [5] Ibid., p.93.

The CORE Synthesis--Farmer

The proper attitude toward race, Farmer argued, was neither color-blindness nor black-nationalism with its attendant racial separation. The former destroys Negro pride and denies him an identity;[7] the second is impractical and denies the Negro his legitimate entry into the society as an equal.[8] CORE, Farmer argued, must choose a middle way: "It must begin the great task of redefining nationalism and redefining integration, so that we can incorporate proud black men and self-assertive black communities as legitimate partners in a new America."[1]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 94.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 87.

[7] See Farmer's debate with Malcolm X, "Malcolm X v. James Farmer: Separation v. Integration," in Broderick and Meier, pp. 357-383.

[8] Ibid., p. 374.

James Farmer took up the task of clarifying nationalism and integration and establishing a CORE position. He argued that the system of segregation was deliberately established to keep the black man down: ". . . it was and is a conspiracy to instill in the Negro _and the white_ a sense of Negro inferiority. . . . Segregation _means_ inferiority, as indelibly as the scarlet letter meant adultress to the New England Puritans. The Negro knows this; it was intended that he know this. . . ."[2] And so did white America, and that, presumbably, was the basis of the Supreme Court's finding that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."[3]

On the basis of the Brown decision, segregation was attacked in every aspect of American life. Soon, Farmer notes, even Negro colleges, churches, newspapers, organizations--all the institutions of the Negro community--were under attack as, at best, "unnecessary anachronisms."[4] The goal became, not merely an end to a system of coerced inferiority--segregation--but "a demand for black dispersal and assimilation."[5] In Farmer's opinion that goal implied that "Negroes couldn't be fully human in the presence of other Negroes."[6]

Farmer's position was different. He argued that "separation need not be inferior in all cases and all places,"[7] and he cited the _de facto_ separation of Jews and Chinese to illustrate his point.[8] The difference between unacceptable segregation and acceptable separation, he argued, is that the former is coerced upon a group against its wishes and is an assertion of their inferiority while the latter is voluntary and may request an assertion of identity or freedom without implying either superiority or inferiority.[1] And, Farmer noted, like Chinese or Jewish Americans, Negroes hate the former but might choose the latter.[2] The relationship of segregation and separation was explained by Farmer in this way:

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[1] _Freedom-When?_, p. 106.
[2] _Ibid._, p. 114.
[3] _Ibid._, pp. 113-114.
[4] _Ibid._, p. 115.
[5] _Ibid._, p. 116.
[6] _Ibid._
[7] _Ibid._
[8] _Ibid._

> *The only way Negro separation would not mean segregation is if the Negro has the sense that he chooses to live separately, and this will happen only when total freedom of choice is a reality in America. Desegregation and the development of Negro self-pride work side by side. Desegregation makes separation possible.*[3] /Italics by Farmer/.

Once that freedom to choose is established, Farmer argued, many Negroes will choose to live separately, but others won't.[4]

What, then, is the responsibility of CORE? James Farmer argued that it was to continue its attacks upon the system of segregation, demanding integrated education, open housing, fair employment practices, but also to enter the Negro ghettos and work "with those masses who couldn't care less about integrating and couldn't afford it if they did care."[5] In the ghettos, CORE would help build a community life and a community spirit. As the artificial barriers of segregation break down, and the community spirit is built up, "segregation will be transformed into separation."[6]

And what is the responsibility of the white liberal? His responsibility, Farmer argued, is to be an integrationist, to destroy the system of segregation for which he, as a white, is responsible.[7] Nor should he advise Negroes to choose separation, for that sounds too much like a demand for segregation.[8] The choice of integration or separation must be the Negro's own, freely and independently made.[1] And finally, in addition to working for integration, the white should work for programs of special compensation for the Negro.[2] Farmer's argument is that a group deprived and held back for generations cannot compete equally and that treating each man simply as an individual will leave Negroes at the bottom of the economic pile. Special compensation, then, is required to redress the balance and enable Negroes to compete effectively.[3]

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[1] *Ibid*., pp. 116-120.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 117.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 118.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 119.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 121.

[6] *Ibid*.

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] *Ibid*., pp. 121-122.

Years of Change: 1964-1967

The years 1964-1967 were years of both solid achievement and bitter frustration from CORE's perspective. Barry Goldwater, whose views on the American Constitution and states rights differed radically from CORE's, was defeated in his bid for the presidency. Congress, spurred by the President and the public, passed legislation in 1964 and 1965 that opened most public accommodations to Negroes, banned job discrimination on the basis of race, and brought federal intervention to assure Negro voting rights. These acts, coupled with the ban on poll taxes and continued Negro pressure, brought a substantial change for the better in the position of many Negroes in American society. And CORE could point with pride to some of these achievements, for they were in part the consequence of the techniques of nonviolent protest and dramatization of injustice pioneered in by CORE.

But the years 1964-1967 were years of frustration and disappointment for CORE too. CORE's participation in the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964 gave CORE a bitter experience of the inability or unwillingness of the national government to protect even the basic rights of American citizenship in Mississippi. There the attempts of CORE and other workers to assert their rights were met by a determined and often violent resistance that was successful, for the time being, in preventing substantial Negro voting registration and other project goals. The violence of that summer--a violence that included a few murders and many beatings, bombings and burnings--demonstrated to CORE and other civil rights workers that they were outside the protection of law--local, state, or federal.

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[1] Ibid., p. 122.

[2] Ibid., p. 124.

[3] Ibid., pp. 122-125.

CORE's frustration was not relieved by its experience in Bogalusa, Louisiana, the next summer. The Bogalusa campaign, CORE's major project for the summer of 1965, produced a confrontation between Negroes and whites that was marked by episodes of violence and charges of broken promises, but it produced only inconclusive results in Bogalusa and failed to produce substantial change in the state. The most highly publicized result of the campaign was the growth of a tacit alliance between CORE workers and the Deacons for Defense and Justice, an armed Negro defense organization.

The year 1966 was no better. The summer began with the shotgun attack on James Meredith, barely into Mississippi on his march to eliminate Negro fear in that state. The major civil rights organizations, including CORE, decided that the march had to be continued, but the immediate result was to reveal a badly divided Negro leadership and launch a divisive slogan--"black power." The march gave endless publicity to the new slogan and its major advocate, Stokely Carmichael, but it failed to stimulate the public support necessary to pass the proposed civil rights act of that year.

Congress failed to pass a civil rights act in 1966, but Negro hopes were raised by the success of the voter registration campaigns conducted by the civil rights organizations in the Deep South. These campaigns, aided by new federal laws and some federally appointed registrars, dramatically raised the number of Negroes registered to vote in the South. The immediate results of the campaign were not the desired ones. In both Georgia and Alabama the new black voting strength produced a white reaction, and a racially polarized vote produced a victory for Lester Maddox in Georgia and a continuation of the Wallace regime in Alabama--a victory for segregation and a broad construction of the spirit of the state constitution which forbids a governor to succeed himself. The victory of Maddox, whose major qualification for the office was that he had chased Negroes from his restaurant in Atlanta with a pistol and ax handles and later closed the restaurant rather than obey the law and serve them, was a stunning upset; the victory of Lurleen Wallace was less surprising but equally bitter for CORE members to take. Moreover, the gubernatorial results were matched by the results in the counties. Even where Negroes had a clear majority of the registered voters, the predicted victories for black sheriffs and county officials failed to materialize. The new Negro voting power, for the time being at least, had failed to solve the Negro predicament in the Deep South.

In these same years, while the nation legislated for the South and the major civil rights organizations concentrated their efforts there, the colored ghettos of the rest of the nation exploded in violence and rioting. Beginning in Harlem and Rochester, then leaping the continent to the Watts section of Los Angeles, then breaking out anew in city after city across the country, the summer race riot with looting and burning and attacks on police, firemen and any passing white became a part of American life. These outbursts dramatized grave flaws in the American system, for surely no society is healthy when order can only be restored by massive applications of police and military power, but they dramatized as well the inadequacies of CORE and the major civil rights organizations, for none proved to have much influence in the ghetto. Thus as one summer of rioting followed another, CORE found itself unable to effectively lead in the ghetto or to materially alter ghetto conditions. Only belatedly did CORE turn to the problem of the ghetto--it was 1966 before CORE refocused its attention and efforts on a major American city, Baltimore, rather than the rural South--but the change, however belated, resulted in fundamental alterations in CORE's philosophy and tactics.

Whatever their other meanings, the riots in the rest of the nation dramatized the fact that the court orders, executive actions and congressional acts that had dismantled the legal framework of the segregation system in the South had not gotten to the core of the racial problem. Worse, as Negro frustration and rioting grew, the Congress that had been able to get two-thirds votes to pass civil rights acts applicable mainly to the South found itself unable to muster a majority for open housing in the North. Thus, as the problems of closed housing, de facto segregation in schools, and a lack of jobs for ghetto Negroes came to the foreground of national attention, the earlier consensus for civil rights legislation disappeared. Meantime civil rights organizations found that white support, moral and monetary, declined greatly as the problems came closer to home and Negro frustration and stridency grew. In three years the Negro cause had passed from the national consensus of the 1964 and 1965 civil rights acts to the divided and hard-pressed movement of 1967. During these years CORE reflected within itself the crisis that confronted the movement for Negro equality by radically transforming its own nature and doctrine.

CORE's Transformation: 1964-1967

Domestic Politics

For more than two decades CORE adhered to a policy of nonpartisanship in domestic politics.[1] Though CORE worked to gain voting rights for Negroes, it did not as an organization take partisan positions. This reflected the traditional position of the major civil rights organizations and was consistent with CORE's emphasis on change through the technique of nonviolent direct action rather than the traditional political structures. In the mid-1960's, however, the policy of nonpartisanship came under increasing strain as it became apparent that the outcome of some elections would make a great difference to CORE's goals. Thus, in 1964, CORE and the other major civil rights organizations feared the election of Barry Goldwater as President. For that reason a conference of the major leaders was called in order to announce a moratorium on all civil rights demonstrations until election day on the theory that further demonstrations would cause a white reaction and help elect Goldwater.[2] James Farmer says that CORE agreed on the purpose of the moratorium--to prevent a Goldwater victory--but disagreed on the method, so CORE did not join the moratorium.[3]

Despite CORE's partisan feelings in the 1964 presidential election, the organization did not officially change its nonpartisan position until the following year. In April, 1965, New York City CORE chapters publicly announced their opposition to the re-election of Mayor Robert Wagner.[1] This lead was followed by the national organization as James Farmer opened CORE's national convention on July 1, 1965, with a speech calling for a major redirection of CORE's effort toward direct involvement in political organization and action. He said:

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[1] See, for example, the 1963 CORE pamphlet, "All About CORE," reprinted in Broderick and Meier, pp. 297-304. The first overt departure from nonpartisanship by CORE was in 1965. See Freedom-When?, p. 181.

[2] See James Farmer's summary of this in Freedom-When?, pp. 42-45.

[3] Ibid, p. 44.

> It is clear that the objectives we seek--in the wiping out of poverty and unemployment, elimination of bad housing, city planning for integration in housing and schools, quality education--are political objectives depending upon responses we can exact from political machinery. We can no longer rely on pressuring and cajoling political units toward desired actions. We must be in a position of power, a position to change those political units when they are not responsive.
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> The only way to achieve political objectives is through power, political power. Only diminishing returns can be achieved through the pressure of demonstrations not backed up by political muscle.[2]

And he added: "Political organization, then, is the vehicle to take us to the desired objective."[3]

CORE's political involvement, as seen by Farmer, was to take the form of community organization in the black ghettos.[4] He stressed the point that CORE must both listen to these people and lead them,[5] and he called for the development of independent Freedom Democratic Movements in both North and South.[6] These parties, as Farmer envisioned them, would not be parties for blacks alone. "Freedom Democratic Movements must not be racist and should not exclude whites. But their base must be in the black ghetto, else they will be merely another exercise in liberal futility!"[1] They would endorse and oppose candidates, run their own men, and remain independent. "Such ghetto-oriented political movements must avoid, at all costs, becoming an adjunct to, or a tool of, any political party, bloc, or machine. They must be controlled by the interests of the black ghetto alone. They must be in a position to make alliances when called for, and break them when necessary."[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

[2] "Annual Report to the CORE National Convention, Durham, N.C., July 1, 1965," p. 425.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 424.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 424-425.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 425-426.

The keynote of the 1965 CORE convention was Farmer's call for the political organization of the black ghettos. But the major effort of CORE in 1965 was a campaign in Bogalusa, Louisiana, hardly a major center of Negro population or political power, actual or potential. In fact, the Freedom Democratic Parties called for by Farmer did not come into existence in more than a few places. Indeed, through the early summer of 1967 neither CORE nor any other organization had effectively organized the great Negro ghettos of the nation. The gap between the call for political organization of the ghettos and the actual organization of the ghetto surely had many causes, but one contributing factor was the financial plight of CORE. Instead of sending full-time paid organizers to the ghetto, CORE was reducing its staff and closing regional offices in Louisiana and California.[3]

The 1966 national CORE convention reaffirmed the previous year's call for progress through political power, but there was a more noticeable hostility toward existing political parties and leaders. This hostility found its expression in the widely publicized slogan of the Meredith march, "black power," and the controversy over that slogan dominated the conference. Thus Dr. King, whose anticipated speech to the conference had been widely publicized, declined to speak on the grounds that it interfered with his duties as a pastor in Atlanta.[1] No doubt those duties were a heavy responsibility, but Dr. King had managed to speak and travel widely in the cause of civil rights, and to some, CORE members included, the explanation did not seem entirely adequate. An alternative expalantion for Dr. King's absence was provided by two of his advisors, Hosea Williams and Benjamin Clarke of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. They indicated that Dr. King's absence was designed to deny a forum to the new philosophy of black power.[2] Whatever the reasons for his absence, Dr. King's cancellation was swiftly followed by the announcement that Stokely Carmichael, chief exponent of the doctrine of "black power," would speak, and his address to the convention was a thoroughgoing attack on white liberals and the "establishment" that was received with "thunderous cheers."[3]

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[1] _Ibid_., pp. 425-426. [2] _Ibid_.

[3] _New York Times_, July 4, 1966, p. 16. See also _New York Times_, July 6, 1967, p. 21.

When the time came for resolutions, the CORE convention formally adopted the "black power" slogan.[4] Its meaning was explained by Floyd McKissick, national director since James Farmer's resignation in March. "The black masses have not been elevated by the [antipoverty] program. As long as the white man has all the power and money, nothing will happen, because we have nothing. The only way to achieve meaningful change is to take power.[5]"

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1. *Ibid.*, July 2, 1966, p. 24. 2. *Ibid.* 3. *Ibid.*, July 3, 1966, p. 28.
4. *Ibid.*, July 5, 1966, p. 1. 5. *Ibid.*

In essence this differed little from Farmer's position the year before. Indeed, Lincoln Lynch, associate national director, recalled that Farmer had stressed three elements the previous year--an improved self-image for Negroes and acquisition of economic and political power--and Lynch said that these added up to "black power."[1]

Nevertheless, the mood of the convention and the tone of the statements and resolutions were different than those of Farmer the previous year. The new director, McKissick, dismissed President Johnson as the "'great white father' to whom the 'Toms' always appeal for help,"[2] and CORE resolutions attacked various aspects of American domestic and foreign policy.[3] CORE, then, was still emphasizing political power, but increasingly that power was seen as not only independent but separate from and in many ways hostile toward existing political leaders and parties, even those who had led the fight for the 1964 and 1965 civil rights acts. Thus in June, 1966, Floyd McKissack attacked the White House Conference on Civil Rights with the charge that: "There's a prevailing sentiment that the conference has been rigged by the Administration,"[4] a sentiment that he later repeated,[5] and he stated that he participated only "in order that the militant can bring forth ideas which otherwise would not be brought forth."[6] The major idea was apparently an attack on America's Vietnam policy, an attack the conference refused to adopt.[7]

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[1] Ibid., July 2, 1966, p. 24.

[2] Ibid., July 5, 1966, p. 22.

[3] Ibid., pp. 1, 22.

[4] Ibid., June 1, 1966, p. 33C.

[5] "No Miracles," Time Magazine, LXXXVII (June 10, 1966), 35.

[6] New York Times, June 1, 1966, p. 33C.

[7] Ibid., June 3, 1966, p. 21C.

The suspicion of the existing political structure was revealed again in McKissick's reaction to the removal of Adam Clayton Powell, Negro representative of Harlem, from his duties as chairman of the Education and Labor Committee of the House of Representatives. This action, taking place in January, 1967, McKissick termed "an example of the political castration of black people."[1]

The 1967 CORE national convention reflected CORE's continued movement toward complete black nationalism and total alienation from the existing political parties and leadership. McKissick declared that he considered CORE "an effective revolutionary movement" and "the common front for all black people to unite in."[2] And he repeated earlier statements that the civil rights movement was "dead" and was being replaced by a "black revolution."[3] In keeping with this theme, representatives of a broad range of Negro groups and philosophies were invited to participate. Wilfred Ussery, national chairman, explained that: "This was not a delegate's convention. This was an open convention for all black people and organizations."[4] McKissick added: "We believe in unifying brothers whether they be holy rollers or anything else."[5] CORE, then, perceived itself as organizing blacks for a new revolutionary movement that would replace the old and dead civil rights movement. This new movement, built around the slogan "black power", consciously stressed black pride and black resentment. As a result, white participation, already limited to service rather than leadership, was further discouraged and limited by deletion of the term "multiracial" from the membership clause of the organization.[6]

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1. Commercial Appeal, (Memphis, Tennessee), January 10, 1967, p. 1.

2. New York Times, July 6, 1967, p. 1. 3. Ibid. 4. Ibid., p. 21.

5. Ibid. 6. Ibid., p. 1.

and by statements such as McKissick's when he explained that it was desirable for whites to have a "role in helping black people accomplish black power," but they could best achieve that by actions "in their churches, synagogues and on the streets."[1] Mr. Ussery added that: "The very nature of black power programs will define the role of the participants. In some instances, whites will not be able to implement the programs that we adopt."[2]

Despite CORE's sharp turn to black nationalism, it did not repudiate all cooperation with whites and the existing political structures. Within CORE itself, an attempt to exclude all whites was defeated,[3] perhaps on the rationale offered by Roy Innis, chairman of the Harlem chapter: "You have to use any energy you can harness. As long as we can control the energy it does not make any difference whether it is white or black."[4] And one goal of CORE as expressed in a resolution was establishing black power by getting "better enforcement of Federal laws."[5] And yet CORE's increasing hostility toward the existing political leaders and parties was clear. In the future Negro goals, as defined by Negroes, were to be gained by the effective political mobilization of the Negro community. Black supplication was to be replaced by black power.

Transformation in Racial Attitudes

The Congress of Racial Equality was founded, as its name implies, to foster racial equality. Originally the emphasis in the organization had been on gaining equality by interracial cooperation and integration. Later the stresses and needs of the movement began to change this pattern and by 1965 James Farmer, national director of CORE, reported that a white member of the organization, otherwise qualified, had been denied the national chairmanship because of his color.[1] Farmer had himself led the opposition to the white candidate and he explained that at the current stage of the movement it was necessary that leadership be in the hands of Negroes.[2] He added that CORE had become a Negro organization.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 1 and 21. [2] Ibid., p. 21.

[3] Ibid; [4] Ibid. [5] Ibid.

The attitude that CORE had become a Negro organization, while satisfying and perhaps necessary from the Negro point of view, appears to have reduced CORE's white support. In June, 1966, John K. Jessup reported that: "When Farmer said, 'We still need outside [i.e., white] money, but we can no longer use outside advice,' he lost a lot of both. In fact CORE is now broke...[4] Floyd McKissick, new national director of CORE , added weight to this report by complaining that he had to spend "much of his time 'holding hands' with white financial supporters who had grown disenchanted..."[5] Nevertheless McKissick, like Farmer before him, argued that "the civil rights movement was not becoming 'Black Nationalist' but simply developing a sense of racial pride."[6]

Despite McKissick's disclaimer of black nationalism, CORE in the same month, on the Meredith march, adopted Stokely Carmichael's slogan of "black power," and the slogan was reaffirmed the following month in the CORE national convention. This mood of black power prevailed in the convention to the point that "white members refrained as much as possible from participating in open discussion."[1]

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[1] Freedom-When?, 90. [2] Ibid,. pp. 89-91. [3] Ibid., p. 88.

[4] John K. Jessup, "An Urgent New Reach to be Equal," Life, 60 (June 3, 1966), 93.

[5] New York Times, June 12, 1966, p. 82. [6] Ibid.

The 1967 convention re-emphasized "black power" and an attempt was made to exclude all white members.[2] This failed, but the word "multiracial" was dropped from the constitutional clause defining membership,[3] and the convention was termed "an open convention for all black people and organizations."[4] By 1967 CORE had become an organization primarily of blacks dedicated to black power by means of the political and economic mobilization of the black community. As yet, though, CORE had not finally excluded whites nor called for black separatism as its ultimate goal.

Changing Attitudes Toward Foreign Policy

CORE was not concerned with foreign policy in its early years. Established to promote racial equality by nonviolent direct action, it found more than enough racial discrimination and injustice in this nation to occupy its time and energies. In the 1950's, however, American Negroes became increasingly aware of the move toward independence in Africa.

> Then Ghana became independent and other black nations fought successfully for independence. We saw proud black people representing these nations in the councils of the United Nations, appearing on television, writing articles, speaking fluent English and French. We were impressed. Cultural groups soon began to form all over the country, calling themselves Afro-American, studying African art, African dance, African history.[5]

An increased awareness of Africa led a number of Negro leaders including Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph, Whitney Young, Jr., Martin Luther King, Jr., and James Farmer to consider the relationship of the civil rights movement in the United States and the independence movement in Africa.[1] James Farmer reports that the group:

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[1] Ibid., July 5, 1966, p. 22.

[2] Ibid., July 6, 1967, p. 21.

[3] Ibid., p. 1.

[4] Ibid., p. 21.

[5] Freedom-When?, pp. 132-133.

> . . . began to think about establishing closer liaison between the African revolutions and the civil rights revolution. As Americans of African descent, we felt we should take the lead in interpreting for America what was happening in Africa and also in explaining to Africans what was happening in America. We felt too that our opinions should weigh in the formation of American foreign policy regarding Africa. And it was out of these considerations that the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa was formed in 1962.[2]

In late 1964 the conference received a grant enabling it to send a representative on an extended trip to Africa. James Farmer made the trip, returning in February, 1965.[3] Upon his return, Farmer criticized United States African policy in general and its Congro policy in particular.[4] He suggested that: ". . . civil rights leaders should seek conference with the President and the Secretary of State, and attempt to influence policy."[5] In fact, the conference leaders had made at least one such attempt as early as November, 1964.[6]

Despite James Farmer's call for civil rights leaders to attempt to influence foreign policy, he was instrumental in preventing CORE, as an organization, from taking a stand on American foreign policy in the 1965 national convention. There a resolution was introduced calling for immediate withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. It passed by a two to one margin.[7] Farmer then intervened, telling the convention: "CORE, as an organization, should stay out of the peace movement and concentrate its efforts on civil rights."[1] He argued that CORE's task was to "mobilize as many people as possible" into the civil rights movement and he asserted that many people would be lost if CORE entered the peace movement.[2] Farmer added that he was personally in agreement with the resolution on foreign policy, but "I think we in CORE should make those decisions as individuals, not as an organization."[3] Farmer's intervention was followed by a reversal of CORE's earlier vote on the resolution.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 133. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 132.

[4] Ibid. See chapter, "Africa Revisited," pp. 131-165.

[5] Ibid., p. 163.

[6] New York Times, November 30, 1964, p. 14c.

[7] Ibid., July 5, 1966, p. 1.

In 1966 CORE finally entered the field of foreign policy by passing resolutions at its annual conference calling for withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam and pledging to "support anyone who refused to serve in the armed forces because of the Vietnam war."[5] The latter CORE resolution stated that the Selective Service System "'places a heavy discriminatory burden' on minority groups and the poor," and it "pledged to explain the 'immorality' of the war to Negro youths."[6] In June, 1966, Roy Innis, a major CORE figure in New York, argued that "the Pax Americana of Johnson refers to white people and the interests of white people, not the world that is mostly nonwhite."[7] And in June a CORE member of the Meredith march displayed a placard that has become a standard in peace demonstrations by Negroes. It said simply: "No Viet Cong Ever Called Me Nigger."[8] Later, in the massive protest against the

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1. _Ibid_., July 6, 1965, p. 1.
2. _Ibid_., p. 24c.
3. _Ibid_.
4. _Ibid_.
5. _Ibid_., July 5, 1966, pp. 1, 22.
6. _Ibid_.
7. "No Miracles," pp. 35-36.
8. _New York Times_, June 21, 1966, p. 30c.

Vietnamese war held in April, 1967, Floyd McKissick stood in front of the United Nations building and condemned American policy with the words: "We're here to confront a lie. . . ."[1] CORE had moved from neutrality in foreign policy to involvement and hostile opposition to major portions of American policy.

A Shift From the Rural South to the Urban Ghetto

The first CORE chapter was formed in Chicago in 1942. For years CORE remained an urban organization, launching campaigns in Chicago, in the Palisades Park across the Hudson from New York City, in St. Louis and Baltimore, in Richmond, Virginia. Then, following the student sit-ins, beginning in 1960, it changed its focus to the South. It aided the sit-ins, launched the Freedom Rides and Freedom Highways programs, participated in the Council of Federated Organizations' Mississippi Project in the summer of 1964, and concentrated its effort on Bogalusa, Louisiana, in the summer of 1965. The New York City chapters of CORE had been active in this period, it is true, and their threatened "stall-in" at the World Fair in April, 1964, gained nationwide attention, but that chapter's activities and Dr. King's Birmingham campaign in 1963 are the important exceptions to the assessment by Lerone Bennett, Jr., Senior Editor of Ebony: "One fact that future historians will find incredible is that in the whole period from 1960 to 1964 none of the major leaders of the rebellion led a major campaign in a major American city."[2]

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[1] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), April 16, 1967, p. 1.

[2] Lerone Bennett, Jr., Confrontation: Black and White (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1966), p. 228.

By 1965 James Farmer was arguing: ". . . we must not, we cannot, leave the ghetto to the rabid nationalists. For it is in the urban ghetto that Negro history will be made in the foreseeable future."[1] And he supported his argument by pointing out that:

> Today more than 60 per cent of America's twenty million Negroes live in large cities and about 40 per cent live in fifteen great Northern cities. All trends indicate that the urbanization of the Negro will continue. By 1975 Negroes may constitute a majority or near majority of the populations of several major cities: Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, Newark.[2]

Because of the concentration of Negro population in the major cities, Farmer was able to argue that "the potential power of the ghetto is enormous."[3] And he called for organization of the Negro community "house by house, block by block, into political units."[4] This appeal was not entirely new; indeed, at CORE's national convention in 1965 Farmer noted that the term "community organization" had become "almost a chiche."[5] And he noted that many CORE chapters had "made a serious attempt at ghetto involvement."[6] But he added: "If we are honest we will admit that most have failed, though a few have had small successes. . . ."[7] Rather than leave the ghettos to the "rabid nationalists," Farmer proposed a major effort to organize the Negro community. The CORE convention ratified that proposal,[8] but its major effort at community organization in 1965 was in Bogalusa, Louisiana, a town of 27,000 in rural Louisiana.[9]

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[1] Freedom-When?, p. 103.   [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 104.   [4] Ibid.

[5] "Annual Report to the CORE National Convention, Durham, N.C., July 1, 1965," p. 424.

[6] Ibid.   [7] Ibid.

[8] New York Times, July 5, 1965, p. 4.   [9] Ibid.

James Farmer's concern about the ghettos was justified. The riots in New York City and Rochester in 1964, in Los Angeles in 1965, in Cleveland and Chicago in 1966 and in Newark and Detroit in 1967 indicated that they were seething with hostility and frustration and were susceptible to the appeal of the black nationalist extremists. Moreover, these same riots indicated that neither CORE nor the other major organizations could control the explosive ghettos. In this period they had been unable to prevent the riots, unable to stop them once they started, and unable to materially alter the conditions that bred them. As Farmer put it after the riot in Los Angeles: "Civil-rights organizations have failed. No one had any roots in the ghetto in Watts."[1] In CORE's case, it was 1966 before it concentrated its major effort of the summer in a major city--Baltimore, Maryland.[2] The Baltimore campaign continued to be the major CORE campaign in the summer of 1967, but two summers and a winter of effort produced disappointing results:

> . . . the "Target City" drive has fallen considerably short of the bull's-eye. Its eye-catching first victories--the nominal "integration" of some night spots and luxury apartments--proved meaningless: Negroes simply weren't interested. CORE has successfully organized a Maryland Freedom Union (which won bargaining rights at three retail stores) and leased a filling station to train school dropouts. But other projects have not taken hold. CORE has enlisted only 35 women for a welfare mothers' union, enrolled only 85 students (the goal: 500) in "freedom schools" that dispense Negro history, consumer-buying advice, tips on filing applications (and complaints) with the welfare bureaucracy. While McKissick talks of spreading some of the programs (notably the freedom schools) to other cities, Baltimore CORE chairman James Griffin confesses: "The project has bogged down. We need $100,000 and we don't even have 10 per cent of it."[3]

Despite the disappointing progress in Baltimore, CORE reaffirmed its

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1. "Tough Years Ahead," p. 19.

2. For a description of CORE's Baltimore project and its early successes, see "Target City: CORE zeroes in on Baltimore," Newsweek, LXVII (June 6, 1966), 28, 31.

3. "Which Way for the Negro?, Newsweek, LXIX (May 15, 1967), 30.

belief in "black power" by political mobilization of the ghetto at the 1967 national convention. For the foreseeable future CORE staked its success or failure on its ability to mobilize and lead the Negro masses in the urban centers of the nation. In doing so it abandoned the Southern focus of the first half of the 1960's.

CORE Repudiates Nonviolence

CORE was founded as an interracial organization committed to the elimination of racial injustice through nonviolent direct action.[1] Nonviolence was the core belief of the organization that had sprung from a consideration of Gandhi's nonviolent campaigns by the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation and its subsequent determination to apply his techniques of nonviolent protest in this nation.[2] CORE's commitment to nonviolence, then, was one of principle, and nonviolence remained a central part of the CORE vision for more than two decades. Thus in 1963 a widely distributed leaflet, "CORE, Rules for Action," printed with a picture of Gandhi over the title, stated of CORE members: "He will meet the anger of any individual or group in the spirit of good will and creative reconciliation: he will submit to assault and will not retaliate in kind either by act or word."[3]

In the third decade of its existence CORE's commitment to nonviolence began to weaken. As CORE's membership expanded rapidly in the early sixties, it was infused with increasing numbers of ends-oriented militants who accepted nonviolence only as a tactic, not as a religious or philosophical commitment.

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[1] *Freedom-When?*, p. 54.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] "CORE Rules for Action, rule six.

James Farmer referred to these militants as the "new Jacobins" and reported that under their influence nonviolence became for CORE "neither a mere tactic which may be dropped on any occasion nor an inviolable spiritual commitment."[1] Later in Bogalusa, Louisiana, CORE workers accepted the protection of an armed Negro defense organization, the Deacons for Defense and Justice,[2] but in the 1965 national convention in Durham, North Carolina, CORE delegates "voted, 120 to 4, against considering action that could have put the organization on record as encouraging the growth of Negro self-defense organizations such as the Deacons for Defense in Louisiana."[3] Formally, then in early 1965 CORE retained nonviolence and refused to encourage self-defense organizations. Nevertheless, CORE had been working with the Deacons in Bogalusa and it continued to accept their protection. James Farmer, speaking a few days after the Durham convention, commented on the situation:

> Our so-called "alliance" with the Deacons is a partnership of brothers, not a tactical alliance of two armies. They don't tell us how to conduct a march, run a voter registration campaign..and we don't teach them how to zero in on a moving target.
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> One thing is apparent in this year of our Lord 1965--Negroes in this nation are down to about their last ounce of patience. For all the hoopla and the speech-making and legislation, very little has changed in the reality of Negro life in this country...
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> Now if you accept that as a fact--then it's clear that violence may be on the horizon. And if violence is on the horizon, I would certainly prefer to see it channeled into a defense discipline rather than random homicide and suicide of rioting.[4]

Farmer quickly added: "Understand, the Deacons don't replace legal law enforcement--there is no such thing as legal law enforcement in much of the South

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1. Freedom-When?, p. 78.

2. See, for example, Shana Alexander, "Visit Bogalusa and you will look for me," Life, 59 (July 2, 1965), p. 28.

3. New York Times, July 6, 1965, p. 24C.

4. Ibid., July 9, 1965, p. 14C.

that will protect a Negro citizen."[1]

CORE's attitude toward self-defense changed rapidly in the spring and summer of 1966. Floyd McKissick, newly appointed the national director of CORE, explained in May that Negro "leadership is still advocating nonviolence --totally. But I think that its mights hard to teach nonviolence in the ghetto now--increasingly difficult."[2] In June, on the Meredith march, McKissick was still advocating nonviolence. There he told reporters he had "talked 'way into the night' telling Deacons and the marchers that the march 'must remain nonviolent.'"[3] And he added: "I don't believe in no damn war."[4] Yet in Baltimore, on July 2, McKissick told reporters that "the doctrine of nonviolence had outlived its usefulness and could 'no longer be sold to the black people.'" He added, however, that CORE opposes "the initiation of violence by its members."[5] CORE's position, according to McKissick, was that "if a Negro, his family, home or friends are attacked they have the right to defend themselves."[6] McKissick defended the change in CORE's position by arguing that "the right of self-defense is a constitutional right and you can't expect black people to surrender that right while whites maintain it.."[7] "If you want nonviolence then the white people must also practice it."[8] On July 4, 1966, CORE formally adopted a resolution calling for an end to "nonviolence in the civil rights movement."[9] One year later, at CORE's national

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1. "A Negro Warns of Violence, and Gives Reasons," U. S. News and World Report, 60 (May 23, 1966), 42.

2. New York Times, June 14, 1966, p. 19C. 3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., July 3, 1966, p. 28. 5. Ibid. 6. Ibid. 7. Ibid.

8. Ibid. 9. Commercial Appeal, (Memphis, Tennessee), July 4, 1966, p.7

convention in Oakland, California, Floyd McKissick said that the civil rights movement was "dead."[1] In its place a "black revolution" had emerged, and he considered CORE "an effective revolutionary movement" and "the common front for all black people to unite in."[2] A little more than two weeks later in Newark, New Jersey, which had just undergone the most extensive racial explosion to that time since Watts, McKissick, attending a national "black power conference," was quoted as saying that "people had a constitutional right to revolt or use violence if they are victims of 'intolerable conditions,'" and he added that "whites are planning the extermination of the nation's blacks."[3] Nonviolence was no longer the guiding philosophy of CORE.

The Radical Transformation of CORE

For more than two decades after its creation in 1942 CORE remained largely unchanged in its guiding principles. It was founded as an interracial, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the removal of racial injustice in the United States through nonviolent direct action. True to its pacifist and Gandhian origins, it stressed change through co-operation rather than coercion, and reconciliation as its final goal. These principles, first outlined in 1942, were reaffirmed in 1963 in the pamphlet, "All About CORE." CORE, according to the argument of that pamphlet, was nonviolent because:

> CORE seeks understanding, not physical victory. It seeks to win the friendship, respect and even support of those whose racial policies it opposes. People cannot be bludgeoned into a feeling of equality. Integration, if it is not to be tense and artificial, must, in CORE's view,

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[1] New York Times, July 6, 1967, p. 1.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), July 23, 1967, p. 7.

> be more than an armed truce. Real racial equality can be attained only through co-operation; not the grudging co-operation one exacts from a beaten opponent, but the voluntary interaction of two parties working toward a solution of a mutual problem.[1]

In 1963, then, CORE still stressed change through nonviolent protest rather than violent coercion. Its aim was voluntary cooperation rather than coerced submission. Moreover, it saw racial discrimination as "a problem for all Americans" and stressed that "Negroes alone cannot eliminate it."[2]

That same 1963 pamphlet stated that: "CORE is an inter-racial group...It is open to anybody who opposes racial discrimination, who wants to fight it and who will adhere to CORE's rules."[3] And it added that CORE "avoids partisan politics of any kind..."[4] The pamphlet concluded by listing the CORE rules for action and explaining them. These reflected the Gandhian and Christian origins of the organization by stressing a spirit of understanding and reconciliation as well as stating again the commitment to nonviolence. The first rule, for example, states that: "A CORE member will make a sincere effort to avoid malice and hatred toward any group or individual."[5] The second rule states that: "A CORE member will never use malicious slogans or labels to discredit any opponent."[6] And the supporting explanation asserts that: "Vindictiveness and personal attacks have no place in CORE's program. They do not win friends, respect, or support for the group or its cause and, anyway, verbal abuse reflects most unfavorably on the speaker."[7] The principle of nonviolence is stated in the fourth rule: "A member will meet the anger of any individual or group in the spirit of good will and creative reconciliation: he will submit to assault and will not retaliate in kind either by act or word."[1]

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[1] "All About CORE," p. 298. [2] Ibid., pp. 298-299.

[3] Ibid., p. 299. [4] Ibid. [5] Ibid., p. 300. [6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

By 1967 CORE had lost almost all resemblance to the organization described in the 1963 pamphlet. The principle of nonviolence, the heart of the earlier CORE, had been formally abandoned in 1966.[2] The spirit of love and malice toward none had perhaps already departed. Lillian Smith evidently thought so when she resigned from CORE's advisory committee in July, 1966, after nine years in that position, with a blast at the leadership of CORE as "new killers of the dream," a reference to her novel, Killers of the Dream, in which she had described the terrible cost in human suffering imposed by racist attitudes.[3] In explaining her resignation, Lillian Smith spoke of the new attitudes of CORE and said that CORE "had once refused tactics 'dictated by anger and hate,'"[4] but she turned her anger at the change in CORE on white America too, arguing that: "white Americans, because of their inertia or their violence, 'must carry much of the moral burden' for CORE's new tactics."[5]

Both the spirit of nonviolence and formal adherence to it were gone in CORE by July, 1966. In its place was a new principle, "black power," that symbolized to many people a rejection of CORE's past. Certainly "black power," as it came to be defined in the following year, laid stress on Negro progress through racial solidarity and political power rather than nonpartisan interracial co-operation and moral conversion. Black America was to organize for strength so that its demands must be met. No longer was the white man to be asked, humbly and nonviolently, for equality in hopes that the spectacle of nonviolent protest would convert him; rather the organized might of black America was to demand rights and by its strength force the change. By 1967 CORE had lived up to its "black power" slogan by eliminating the multiracial clause in its constitution, by declaring the civil rights movement dead, by declaring itself a revolutionary movement, and its national director, Floyd McKissick, had given tacit approval to the violence that swept the ghettos of the nation. CORE had completed its transformation.

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[1] Ibid., p. 301.

[2] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), July 5, 1966, p. 7.

[3] Ibid., July 6, 1966, p. 16.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

Chapter III

THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC or "Snick") has been the most consistently dramatic and radical of all the major Negro protest organizations in its approach to the problem of race relations in America. It was not the first organization to engage in nonviolent direct action, but the student sit-ins of 1960 captured the imagination of Negro and white alike and spread rapidly over the Upper South. From that point on nonviolent direct confrontation of the segregation system never disappeared for long and the active engagement of considerable groups never faltered--the "movement" was born.

The sit-ins established nonviolent confrontation on a continuing basis, but SNCC soon went beyond sit-ins and public accommodations to long-term organization of communities. While Dr. King led massive demonstrations in particular cities and created in them a crisis leading, often, to political activity on the national level, SNCC established its organizers in local communities and sought to prove that it would be there before--and after--the crisis had passed. It brought grass-roots organization to the Deep South on a continuous basis.[1]

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[1] In this, of course, it must share the credit with the NAACP, SCLC and CORE, but SNCC made a particular point of it.

SNCC's attack on the segregation system soon came to center on Mississippi and Alabama, the centers of the most uncompromising resistance. Against the walls of defiance erected by these states SNCC found tool after tool inadequate. Nonviolent marches, sit-ins, and protests were blunted by bombings, burnings, and beatings, by unpunished murders as well as all sorts of quasi-legal harassments. Attempts at voter registration and political organization met the same fate. Appeals to the Constitution, to the Justice Department, to the F.B.I., to Congress and the President failed also to protect the rights of Negroes and civil rights workers in Mississippi and Alabama through the summer of 1964.

Throughout the decade SNCC grew more radical, more alienated from the values of American society, more distrustful of existing governments--local, state or federal--more despairing of adequate change by traditional means within the established framework of political parties and governmental institutions. And its challenges grew more strident. Finally, with the elevation of Stokely Carmichael as its chief spokesman, SNCC launched the "black power" slogan and movement that came, increasingly, to stand for complete hostility toward white America and any Negroes that had integrated into it. Under Carmichael's leadership and that of H. Rap Brown who followed him, SNCC came to stand for separation of races, violence and guerilla warfare, and a repudiation of most that the early SNCC had believed in most fervently.

The significance of SNCC's travail resides partly, at least, in what it tells about American society and the adequacy of various techniques of protest. In its brief history SNCC has employed the whole range of activist techniques of protest from disciplined nonviolent direct action to political activity and finally advocacy of guerilla warfare. Clearly traditional means of change were found inadequate by SNCC, clearly the arguments for the newer techniques of nonviolent protest failed to carry conviction, and SNCC turned finally to advocacy of the traditional weapon of the oppressed--violent rebellion. An examination of SNCC, then, is an examination of a democracy's slowness to remedy legitimate grievances and the increasingly desperate efforts and means used to speed that process. It is an examination, too, of the problems involved in the use of various activist techniques of change. It becomes, finally, an examination of the comparative merits of violence and nonviolence as techniques by which an unjustly treated minority may strive for justice in a democracy.

The Beginning: The Student Sit-Ins of 1960

On February 1, 1960, four freshman students of the all-Negro North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro entered the F.W. Woolworth store, purchased a tube of toothpaste apiece, and then sat at the lunch counter where they tried to buy a cup of coffee. The response is reported by Jack Newfield:

> "I'm sorry but we don't serve colored here," she [a white waitress] informed them politely.
>
> Franklin McCain responded, "I beg your pardon, but you just served me at a counter two feet away. Why is it that you serve me at that counter and deny me at another? Why not stop serving me at all the counters?"
>
> A few minutes later the manager of the store told the youths, "I'm sorry but we can't serve you because it is not the local custom."
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> The four young Negroes remained at the counter, coffeeless, until 5:30 P.M., when the store closed.[1]

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[1] Jack Newfield, A Prophetic Minority (New York: The New American Library, 1966), pp. 36-37.

The next day, Tuesday, twenty students sat-in at the lunch counter and were refused service. On Wednesday fifty students, including some from a local Negro highschool and a few white co-eds from the Women's College in Greensboro, received the same treatment. By Friday the sit-in had expanded to the S. H. Kress store and the participants encountered heckling by white highschool students. On Saturday several hundred students were involved and both stores closed, one because of a bomb threat.

The following week sit-ins occured in Durham, Raleigh, Charlotte, Winston-Salem, High Point, Salisbury and Concord, North Carolina. In addition, they spread to Rock Hill and Orangeburg in South Carolina. On February 12, in Raleigh, the first arrests occured. Forty-three students, mostly Negro, were jailed for trespassing. On February 27 there was sporadic violence against students sitting-in Nashville, Tennessee, and all seventy-six of those sitting-in were jailed. On March 14, in Orangeburg, South Carolina, following a series of seminars on nonviolence at Negro colleges, seven hundred students marched downtown where they were met with tear gas and fire hoses.

> More than 500 were arrested, and 350 of them were locked into an eight-feet-high chicken coop because the jails were full. The next day The New York Times carried a front page picture of the 350 huddling in a chicken-coop stockade, in subfreezing temperatures--singing "God Bless America."[1]

One year after the Greensboro sit-in the NAACP had paid for the defense of 1700 demonstrators,[2] and "over 50,000 people--most were Negroes, some were white--had participated in one kind of demonstration or another in a hundred cities, and over 3600 demonstrators spent time in jail.[3] The sit-ins desegregated few lunch counters in the Deep South, but "several hundred" had been integrated in the Upper South, the border states, and Texas and Oklahoma.[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 37. [2] Ibid., p. 38. [3] Howard Zinn, SNCC: The New Abolitionists (Second edition; Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), p.16. Hereafter referred to as SNCC.

The typical penalty imposed on the students who challenged the segregation system by their sit-ins was arrest followed by either jail or bail if an appeal were made. As students, though, they were also subject to discipline by their schools, and in some cases the schools reacted harshly. In Nashville, for example, James Lawson, one of the leaders of the nonviolent movement there, was given the choice of withdrawing from the movement or his school, the Divinity School of Vanderbilt University. Lawson refused to do either and he was expelled only three months before graduation. This decision of the trustees was not liked by the faculty, however, and by May, 1960, the Dean of the Divinity School, J. Robert Nelson, and eleven of the sixteen members of the Divinity School Faculty had resigned in protest.[2] In other schools there were more student dismissals and fewer faculty resignations.

> At Southern University in Baton Rouge, whose 5,000 students made it the largest Negro institution in the nation, eighteen sit-in leaders were suspended. At Albany State College in Albany, Georgia, the president eventually got rid of forty student demonstrators. At Alabama State and Florida A & M, punishment was swift. Even at some private, church-supported institutions, like Benedict and Allen Colleges in South Carolina, college administrators threatened expulsion for students who joined the sit-in movement and fired the few faculty members who spoke their minds.[3]

The white reaction to the sit-ins included violence as well as legal and quasi-legal harassment. In Nashville the Negro attorney for the demonstrators, Z. Alexander Looby, had his home bombed on April 19, 1960.[1]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

[3] Ibid., p. 30.

Elsewhere:

> In Jacksonville, Florida, the city was in turmoil for three days: a white sit-in student was attacked in jail and his jaw was broken; a sixteen-year-old Negro boy was pistolwhipped by the Ku Klux Klan; a Negro man unconnected with the demonstrations who went through a police roadblock was shot to death by a white service station attendant. In Atlanta, acid was thrown at sit-in leader Lonnie King. In Frankfort, Kentucky, the gymnasium of a Negro college was set afire. In Columbia, South Carolina, a Negro sit-in student was stabbed. In Houston, Texas, a twenty-seven-year-old Negro was kidnapped and flogged with a chain, and the symbol KKK was carved on his chest.
>
> Mississippi responded with a special savagery. When students marched down the street in Jackson, police used clubs, tear gas, and police dogs. Women, children, and a photographer were beaten by police and bystanders, and some demonstrators were bitten by dogs. In Biloxi, Mississippi, Negroes trying to use a public beach were attacked with clubs and chains by crowds of whites, and ten were wounded by gunfire.[2]

The students were fully aware of the danger of violent reprisals for their actions. They consciously chose the path of nonviolence, despite the danger involved, and they accepted the aid and advice of CORE, which had taught and practiced nonviolence for almost two decades. In Orangeburg, South Carolina, for example, CORE held training sessions attended by students of Claflin College and South Carolina State and eventually a thousand students were given some training--training they put to use within the month.[3] That training included instructions revealing a full awareness of the dangers involved. The following is an example of the instructions given.

> You may choose to face physical assault without protecting yourself, hands at the sides, unclenched; or you may choose to protect yourself, making plain you do not intend to hit back. If you choose to protect yourself, you practice positions such as these:
>
> To protect the skull, fold the hands over the head.
>
> To prevent disfigurement of the face, bring the elbows together in front of the eyes.
>
> For girls, to prevent internal injury from kicks, lie on the side and

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

> bring the knees upward to the chin; for boys, kneel down and arch over, with skull and face protected.[1]

Nonviolent direct action, then,was the consciously chosen instrument of the students in their attack on the segregation system in the early months of 1960.

SNCC: Birth and Original Theory

By April 15, 1960, less than three months after the Greensboro sit-in, there were more than sixty centers of sit-in activity.[2] Obviously a movement had been born, and Ella Baker, then executive-secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC, Dr. King's organization), thought the time had come to organize the activity. She suggested a meeting of sit-in leaders to Dr. King and he quickly agreed. The first choice for the site of the meeting, North Carolina A & T at Greensboro, the place at which the movement had begun, was unable to host the conference because of a lack of space. Ella Baker then turned to her alma mater, Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, and found a place for the meeting. SCLC provided eight hundred dollars to finance the conference.[3]

SCLC sponsored the first meeting of the sit-in leaders, but SCLC was not the only civil rights organization interested in the students. From the beginning in Greensboro, the major organizations had given advice and aid. CORE, for example, had sent an attorney, Len Holt, to Greensboro within the first week.[4] And CORE was active throughout the first months of the movement, giving instruction in nonviolence, legal aid, and providing publicity.[1] In Nashville, one of the major centers of the sit-in movement, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR, a Christian pacifist organization), CORE and the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference had all been teaching nonviolence techniques since 1958.[2] When the sit-ins began in 1960, the Nashville branch of the NAACP added its support.[3]

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[1] _Ibid_.

[2] _Ibid_., p. 33.

[3] Newfield, p. 44.

[4] _Ibid_., p. 42.

At the Raleigh meeting, held on Easter weekend, April 15-17, 1960, the major organizations competed for the support of the students. Julian Bond, a participant and later one of SNCC's leaders, remembers that competition:

> People from the SCLC, CORE, the NAACP and every conceivable human relations and civil rights group were at the meeting. Some of them wanted to make the sit-in leaders the nucleus of a youth arm of the SCLC. Others wanted us to become CORE chapters, and the NAACP thought we could raise money for them.[4]

The pressure to formally align themselves with one of the major organizations was intense, but the three hundred student participants decided to preserve their independence while remaining on friendly terms with SCLC and the other organizations.[5]

Keynote Address: Raleigh Conference, April 1960

The keynote address of the conference was delivered by James M. Lawson, Jr., the student who had been expelled from the Vanderbilt Divinity School for his leading role in the Nashville movement.[6] In his address

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[1] See Peck, pp. 56-88. [2] Ibid., p. 64. [3] SNCC, p. 21.

[4] Newfield, p. 45. [5] SNCC, pp. 33-34.

[6] Ibid., p. 33. For the full text see: James M. Lawson, Jr., "We are trying to raise the 'moral issue,'" in Broderick and Meier, pp. 274-281.

Lawson argued that the sit-in movement was an attempt to raise the moral issue involved in racial segregation and he appealed for nonviolence on the grounds that it was a peculiarly Christian technique of protest.

Lawson began by arguing that the students of his generation, who had been labeled "silent," or "uncommitted," had only been waiting for that cause, ideal or event that would actualize their faith and give them the right to "speak powerfully to their nation and world."[1] The sit-ins provided that spark and "God has brought this to pass."[2] Nevertheless, there was a danger that society would fail to catch the meaning of the movement. Merchants hoped for a quick end to the sit-ins, a great university equated them with the fad of panty raids, and "no southern white person and few Negroes expected the collegiates to face the hoses, jails, mobs and tear gas with such dignity, fearlessness, and non-violence."[3] Society, he added, yearned "to diffuse the meaning and flatten the thrust of America's first major non-violent campaign."[4]

The central issue of the sit-ins was not, Lawson argued, his own expulsion from divinity school, though the press had seized on that, nor was it police partiality, though the sit-ins had shown that to police "potential customers, quietly asking for service, are disorderly, breaching the peace, inciting riots, while swaggering, vilifying, violent, defiant white young teenagers are law-abiding."[5] This partiality of the police, however, had always been present in this nation, a symptom or by-product of something deeper.

Neither was the issue simply a legal one. Legal issues were involved--local laws were misued, old ordinances designed to hamper labor were used to crush sit-ins, the Bill of Rights was ignored--but legal issues were not central because law alone is unable to provide justice. "A democratic structure of law remains democratic, remains lawful only as the people are continuously persuaded to be democratic. Law is always nullified by practice and disdain unless the minds and hearts of a people sustain law."[1] Thus legal action by itself is insufficient and legal action was not the purpose of the sit-ins: ". . . if the students wanted a legal case, they had only to initiate a suit. But not a single city began in this fashion. No one planned to be arrested or desired such."[2]

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[1] Lawson, pp. 274-275.

[2] Ibid., p. 275.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 276.

Finally, the issue, as defined by Lawson, was not integration. Integration, in his view, was a means, not an end. Desegregation is required of the Christian because "the redeemed community of which he is already a citizen recognizes no barriers dividing humanity. The Kingdom of God, as in heaven so on earth, is the distant goal of the Christian."[3]

The true message of the sit-in movement, Lawson argued, is twofold. First, it is an assertion that segregation is a moral problem. "The matter is not legal, sociological or racial, it is moral and spiritual. Until America (South and North) honestly accepts the sinful nature of racism, this cancerous disease will continue to rape all of us."[4] Lawson added that: "Segregation (racial pride) is sin. God tolerates no breach of his judgment."[5] And until that message is accepted good laws will be inadequate to provide justice or community.

In the second place, Lawson asserted, the sit-ins are an appeal to

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1. Ibid., p. 277.
2. Ibid., p. 276.
3. Ibid., p. 278.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 279.

"get moving. The pace of social change is too slow." Thus the choice of nonviolence is both judgment and promise. "It is a judgment upon middle-class conventional, half-way efforts to deal with radical social evil. It is specifically a judgment upon contemporary civil rights attempts."[2] Court action, he argued, led to tokenism; interracial groups "expected to end segregation with discussions and teas; the Negro church had failed to act as God's agents to redeem society; and the NAACP, the best existing agency, failed to utilize our greatest resource, a people . . . who can act in a disciplined manner to implement the constitution."[3] The sit-ins, then, were a judgment on the inadequacy of existing techniques of change.

But the sit-ins were a promise too.

> . . . God's promise that if radically Christian methods are adopted the rate of change can be vastly increased. This is why non-violence dominates the movement's perspective. Under Christian non-violence, Negro students reject the hardship of disobedient passivity and fear, but embrace the hardship [violence and jail] of obedience. Such non-violence strips the segregationalist power structure of its major weapon: the manipulation of law or law-enforcement to keep the Negro in his place.
>
> Furthermore, such an act attracts, strengthens and sensitizes the support of many white persons in the South and across the nation.[4]

James Lawson concluded that: "The 'word' from the lunch-counter stool demands a sharp re-assessment of our organized evil and a radical Christian obedience to transform that evil. Christian non-violence provides both that re-assessment and the faith of obedience."[5]

The Founding "Statement of Purpose"

The view of nonviolence contained in James Lawson's keynote address

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1. Ibid. 2. Ibid., p. 280. 3. Ibid.

4. Ibid. 5. Ibid., pp. 280-281.

was similar to Dr. King's in its emphasis on nonviolence as a peculiarly Christian technique of social change. This view was incorporated in the SNCC "Statement of Purpose" adopted on the final day of the Raleigh meeting.

> We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the pre-supposition of our faith, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence as it grows from Judaic-Christian traditions seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. Integration of human endeavor represents the crucial first step towards such a society.
>
> Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regard cancels enmity. Justice for all overthrows injustice. The redemptive community supersedes systems of gross social immorality.
>
> Love is the central motif of nonviolence. Love is the force by which God binds man to Himself and man to man. Such love goes to the extreme; it remains loving and forgiving even in the midst of hostility. It matches the capacity of evil to inflict suffering with an even more enduring capacity to absorb evil, all the while persisting in love.
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> By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.[1]

SNCC's Early Perspective

Most participants in the early sit-in movement were college or high school students. These students aspired to an America that lived up to its professed ideals of democracy and Christianity. The technique they chose to achieve these goals, nonviolent protest, was thought appropriate on religious grounds as a suitable expression of Christian love and on tactical grounds as a means of immediately, directly and dramatically protesting an evil without waiting for the indirect, slow and often futile processes of legal or political challenge. The latter, of course, was simply denied to Negroes in much of the South in 1960. In its early stages, then, the student movement challenged America to live up to its professed ideals and confronted America directly and dramatically with its failure to do so. It did not, however, reject the entire American system. It sought admittance to American society, as equals, for Negro citizens, and it sought a society that lived up to its professions. It was, in a sense, middle-class and idealist, not revolutionary and alienated as the later SNCC was to become.

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[1] Cited in Broderick and Meier, pp. 273-274. Professor Howard Zinn dates this statement both April, 1960 (Raleigh meeting), see SNCC, pp. 220-221, and May, 1960 (Atlanta meeting), see SNCC, p. 34. Jack Newfield cites a third version of the statement, adopted in October, 1960, at the "official" birth of SNCC in Atlanta, that is identical except that it omits the paragraph on love and adds the following: "Although each local group in this movement must diligently work out the clear meaning of this statement of purpose, each act or phrase of our corporate effort must reflect a genuine spirit of love and good-will." Newfield, p. 47.

The spirit of the early movement was captured well in the full page advertisement put in the Atlanta newspapers on March 9, 1960, by students of six Negro colleges in Atlanta. Captioned "An Appeal for Human Rights," it began: "We, the students of the six affiliated institutions forming the Atlanta University Center . . . have joined our hearts, minds, and bodies in the cause of gaining those rights which are inherently ours as members of the human race and as citizens of these United States."[1] Pledging support to the other students engaged in demanding their rights, noting their dissatisfaction with existing conditions and the slow pace of change, the Atlanta students insisted: "Every normal human being wants to walk the earth with dignity and abhors any and all proscriptions placed upon him because of race or color. In essence, this is the meaning of the sit-down protests that are sweeping this nation today."[2] And the white population was warned:

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[1] The entire advertisement was reproduced in James McBride Dabbs, "Dime Stores and Dignity," The Nation, CXC (April 2, 1960), 290.

[2] Ibid.

> We do not intend to wait placidly for those rights which are already legally and morally ours to be meted out to us one at a time. Today's youth will not sit by submissively, while being denied all of the rights, privileges and joys of life. We want to state clearly and unequivocally that we cannot tolerate, in a nation professing and among people professing Christianity, the discriminatory conditions under which the Negro is living today in Atlanta, Georgia--supposedly one of the most progressive cities in the South.[1]

Then, with admirable detail, the students cited specific injustices in seven areas: education, jobs, housing, voting, hospitals, public accommodations, and law enforcement. Under hospitals, for example, they noted that: "Reports show that Atlanta's 14 general hospitals and 9 related institutions provide some 4,000 beds. Except for some 430 beds at Grady Hospital, Negroes are limited to the 250 beds in three private Negro hospitals. Some of the hospitals barring Negroes were built with federal funds."[2] And the students concluded:

> We, therefore, call upon all people in authority--State, County, and City officials; all leaders in civic life--ministers, teachers, and business men; and all people of good will to assert themselves and abolish these injustices. We must say in all candor that we plan to use every legal and non-violent means at our disposal to secure full citizenship rights as members of this great Democracy of ours.[3]

The appeal was to the rights of humanity and citizenship, to the ideals of democracy and Christianity. The object, quite within the law, was "to secure full citizenship rights as members of this great Democracy of ours."[4] However modest this goal may appear to us now, the Governor of Georgia is reported to have reacted with the following words in 1960: "This left-wing statement does not read like it was written in this country."[5] That the demand for full citizenship for Negroes should have evoked such a response may help to explain why SNCC was later to become so radical. Jack Newfield, a charter member of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and a spokesman for the new democratic left, has quite a different view of the early SNCC members:

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[1] _Ibid_. [2] _Ibid_. [3] _Ibid_. [4] _Ibid_. [5] _Ibid_.

> The early sit-in activist was surprisingly middle class and patriotic. He was always well groomed and wore a suit and tie when demonstrating. Often he read the Bible or a copy of the Constitution while sitting at the lunch counter. If he broke his disciplined decorum to sing at the moment of arrest, it was often a patriotic anthem.[1]

Organizational Activity

Participants at the Raleigh conference decided to form a student organization independent from but friendly to SCLC and the other major civil rights organizations.[2] A temporary committee, headed by Ed King, a leader of the Frankfort, Kentucky, sit-ins, was established with instructions to meet on a monthly basis through the summer. The next meeting was held on the Atlanta University campus in May. It was attended by about fifteen student leaders, and representatives from SCLC (Martin Luther King and Ella Baker), CORE (Len Holt), the National Student Association, the YWCA, the American Friends Service Committee and others. The group now called itself the Temporary Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Marion Barry, a graduate student at Fisk, was named chairman. Decisions were made at the Atlanta meeting to set up an office, raise money, coordinate student activities, establish nonviolent institutes and print a newsletter. The office was soon set up in a corner of the SCLC office in Atlanta (reminiscent of CORE's early relationship with FOR), and a newsletter, The Student Voice, was first published in June.

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[1] Newfield, p. 39. [2] SNCC, p. 34. The following account of SNCC activity is from SNCC, pp. 34-37, unless otherwise noted.

Despite its name, the Coordinating Committee did little to coordinate student activities that first summer. Jane Stembridge, SNCC's first secretary, remembers that:

> A great deal of time was spent trying to find out exactly what was going on in the protest centers...Response was next to nil...Members of the first SNCC were vague simply because they were right damn in the middle of directing sit-ins, being in jail, etc., and they did not know what was going on anywhere outside of their immediate downtown...We had no one "in the field" either. SNCC called for demonstrations once or twice. The response was extremely spotty and then the news was not sent in. We could not afford phone calls and so it went. SNCC was not coordinating the movement...[1]

Julian Bond says that the early executive sessions were "talk session" at which members told how many times they had been arrested or beaten. He agrees that there was little coordination of effort.[2]

The sit-in movement by-passed the regular political channels in favor of direct challenge and confrontation. The students were not committed to direct nonviolent protest as the sole technique of change, however, and Marion Barry, first chairman of the organization, testified before the Platform Committee of the Democratic Party at its national convention in Los Angeles in July, 1960. He asked for federal action in various fields:

> ...to speed school desegregation, to enact a fair employment law, to assure the right to vote against Southern economic reprisal and violence, to protect demonstrators against false arrest and police repression by invoking that clause of the Fourteenth Amendment which says: "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges and immuniites of citizens of the United States.[3]

And he replied to ex-President Harry Truman's connection of the sit-ins with Communism:

> To label our goals, methods, and presuppositions "communistic" is to

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1. Ibid., p. 36. 2. Newfield, p. 46. 3. SNCC, p. 36.

> credit Communism with an attempt to remove tyranny and to create an atmosphere where genuine communication can occur. Communism seeks power, ignores people, and thrives on social conflict. We seek a community in which man can realize the full meaning of the self which demands open relationship with others.[1]

Summer, 1961

SNCC's second summer was marked by its determined participation in the CORE sponsored "Freedom Rides," by a heated debate among its members over the comparative merits of voter registration versus direct action against segregated public facilities, by the emergence of a full-time (though underpaid) staff, and by its first attempts at voter registration in Mississippi and Georgia. It was marked, too, by a growing distrust of the federal government and white liberals--a distrust that was to harden in the following summers.

The Freedom Rides

The Freedom Rides of 1961 were initiated by CORE in an effort to establish in practice the desegregation of interstate bus facilities established in theory by the United States Supreme Court's ruling in the Boynton case. In 1947 CORE had undertaken a similar journey through the Upper South in co-operation with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a Christian pacifist organization. The 1961 ride differed from the 1947 journey in that it was intended to travel from Washington, D. C., to New Orleans--a trip through the very heart of Dixie. It differed too in that the later trip was halted by major

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1. *Ibid*., p. 37.

violence, was attended by nationwide publicity and controversy, and stimulated further tests and rides resulting in further violence, mass arrests, publicity and federal intervention. SNCC, though it did not conceive the idea, provided many of the participants. It proved a rough training ground for later SNCC leaders.

On May 4, 1961, after a three day training session in nonviolence, the first two buses left Washington. In Rock Hill, South Carolina, two riders, John Lewis of SNCC and Albert Bigelow, a pacifist, were slugged. Neither was seriously hurt.[1] Later, near Anniston, Alabama, one bus was stopped and set afire. Everyone got out of the burning bus despite an attempt to keep them inside,[2] but twelve riders were hospitalized for smoke inhalation and one, Henry Thomas, was attacked by a man wielding a club.[3] Meanwhile, the second bus entered Anniston where it was met by an angry mob that climbed aboard and beat the Negroes having the audacity to sit in the front. When order was restored the bus went on to Birmingham where it was again met by a mob. There James Peck of CORE and Charles Person of the Atlanta student movement were badly beaten, Peck requiring fifty-three stitches on his head to close his wounds.[4] At Birmingham the bus drivers, understandably, refused to drive the group any further, so the riders were forced to take an airplane to New Orleans in order to complete the journey. In sum, the first 1961 Freedom Ride was successfully stopped by mob violence and police partiality only half way to its destination.

SNCC's first reaction to the violence in Alabama was to get federal protection for the riders. Diane Nash and Lonnie King made the attempt by telephoning the Department of Justice, but they were told, in the SNCC version, that the Justice Department could not "protect anyone, but if something happened, they would investigate."[1] Later, when the CORE group was unable to continue by bus and had to fly to New Orleans, a discussion ensued between the two centers of SNCC power--Atlanta and Nashville--and it was decided that the Freedom Ride had to be successfully completed. Failure to complete it "would prove that violence could overcome nonviolence."[2] Diane Nash assembled a group of students in Nashville and, accompanied by John Lewis and Henry Thomas, participants in the first ride, they left for Birmingham on May 17, 1961. There they were arrested, put in jail for the night, and the next morning "Bull" Connor, the Birmingham police chief who was later to become famous for his attempts to suppress Martin Luther King's demonstrations, drove the students 120 miles to the Tennessee state boundary and put them out. The students returned to Nashville, gathered additional students, and by the same afternoon had returned by bus to Birmingham.[3] This was only five days after the first violence in Anniston and Birmingham.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 42. The following account is from SNCC, pp. 42-45, unless otherwise noted.

[2] Peck, p. 96. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., p. 99.

The Freedom Rides began as an attempt to test and to challenge an evil by nonviolent direct action outside the ordinary political channels. The ensuing violence created a national furor, however, and the federal government was forced to intervene. (This sequence of events, nonviolent protest outside the ordinary political channels producing a dramatic crisis requiring political intervention, became for a period a typical pattern in American politics.) Thus on May 19, 1961, President John Kennedy tried to telephone the Alabama Governor, John Patterson. The President failed to reach the Governor, but he did talk to the Lieutenant-Governor, urging that the state of Alabama protect interstate travelers. That evening John Siegenthaler of the Department of Justice conferred with Governor Patterson and conveyed to Attorney-General Robert Kennedy Patterson's assurance that he could "fully protect everyone in Alabama."[1] With this assurance a bus left Birmingham for Montgomery. The bus was escorted between the cities, but the escort disappeared upon arrival in Montgomery and a mob greeted its arrival. In the ensuing melee two riders, James Zwerg and John Lewis, and some newsmen were badly beaten, as was John Siegenthaler of the Justice Department. Siegenthaler was making an attempt to protect a girl freedom rider when he was struck from behind and rendered unconscious. He lay on the street nearly half an hour before being taken to a hospital.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 45.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

The mob action in Montgomery proved again that Alabama state and local police would not provide protection for the Freedom Riders and it provoked further federal intervention. President Kennedy called on the state of Alabama to meet its responsibilities and promised that the federal government would meet its responsibilities.[3] Federal marshals were sent to Montgomery. Four days later the Freedom Riders, joined by additional recruits and heavily escorted by patrol cars and aircraft, traveled on to Jackson, Mississippi. There they were arrested for breach of peace and refusal to obey an officer (trying to use white rest rooms.)[4] With the journey finally completed, Robert Kennedy called for a "cooling-off period." Dr. King's group accepted the plea, but the students ignored it and kept going to Jackson by train and bus.[1] By the end of the summer more than three hundred people had made the trip to Jackson, there to be arrested.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 47. [2] Ibid., p. 48.

[3] Ibid., pp. 49-50. [4] Ibid., p. 51.

The Freedom Rides, begun by CORE but carried on in large part by SNCC, gave a convincing demonstration of the abundant courage and passion for racial justice possessed by members of the student movement. These students pressed on for their constitutional and human rights, adhering rigorously to nonviolence and nonretaliation, despite the violence heaped on them by white mobs and despite the unwillingness of any level of government--local, state or federal--to give them consistent protection. The lack of protection by the federal government, Howard Zinn reports, instilled in many of the students an increasing distrust of white liberals and the national government.[3] That distrust, later to deepen into a nearly complete rejection of white liberals and the federal government, was sufficiently strong by the end of the summer to become a factor in the debate over voter registration versus direct nonviolent protest as the proper focus of further SNCC efforts.

Voter Registration versus Direct Action

SNCC was born out of the spontaneous series of student sit-ins that swept the South in the early months of 1960. Its initial focus was upon direct nonviolent challenges to the existing segregation system. This continued to be the main focus of its efforts through the summer of 1961, but a debate over the proper techniques to force change had begun in the June, 1961, meeting in Louisville and had continued in the July meeting in Baltimore and the August meeting at the Highlander Folk School. Tim Jenkins, vice-president of the National Student Association, initiated the argument in June by proposing that SNCC change the focus of its efforts and concentrate on registering Negro voters in the South.[1] Jenkins had attended meetings earlier in the year at which representatives of the Taconic and the Field Foundations had spoken of raising funds for registration of Negro voters in the South. An aura of federal administration approval had been lent to the idea by the presence at these meetings of Burke Marshall, Assistant Attorney-General in charge of the Civil Rights division of the Justice Department, and Harris Wofford, special assistant to the President on civil rights.[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 53. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 54. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

The implied support of the Administration and the promised support of the foundations caused the proposals to be looked upon with suspicion by some SNCC members who had taken part in the Freedom Rides. Neither white liberals nor the federal government had given full support to those rides--certainly the riders had not received much protection from violence and quasi-legal harassment in their efforts to assert their legal and moral rights--and Robert Kennedy's appeal for a cooling-off period had "reinforced the suspicion that an attempt was being made to cool the militancy of the student movement and divert the youngsters to slower, safer activity."[3] Tim Jenkins did not dispute this point of view. He was himself convinced that the Justice Department wanted to channel the students' efforts into more moderate and less controversial areas, but he still advised acceptance of the aid because he was convinced that voter registration was in fact the crucial factor in forcing racial progress in the South.[1]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 58. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

The debate came to a head in August at the Highlander Folk School meeting. Diane Nash and Marion Barry led a faction supporting nonviolent direct action; Tim Jenkins led the faction favoring voter registration. For a time the debate was so heated that SNCC was in danger of splitting into two organizations. Then Ella Baker, who had been instrumental in the birth of SNCC, helped to frame a compromise by which the warring factions were divided into separate divisions within the SNCC organization. One division, led by Diane Nash, was to be responsible for direct action projects; the other, led by Charles Jones, was to concentrate on voter registration.[2] The compromise saved the organization, but the argument was only shelved, not settled. SNCC continued to have militant participants in direct action projects and others who scorned such tactics as sensationalist and superficial.

Fall, 1961: SNCC Acquires a Paid, Full-Time Staff

SNCC began as an attempt to co-ordinate the protest activities of students. For a year and a half it remained a group of unpaid spare-time militants, still largely a student organization. Then, in the fall of 1961, money raised by Harry Belafonte and others enabled a number of the students to continue as full-time paid activists rather than return to school. Charles Jones, James Bevel, Charles Sherrod and Robert Moses were among the first paid staff members.[3] Meanwhile, Jane Stembridge and Ed King, both of whom had acted as executive secretary for SNCC, returned to school, so SNCC was in need of someone to fill that post. Diane Nash called James Forman, then in Chicago teaching but a veteran of SNCC activity, and offered him the job. He accepted and remained an important figure in SNCC through the summer of 1967. A graduate of Roosevelt College in Chicago, Forman had done graduate work on Africa at Boston University, had studied French at Middlebury College, and had proved his militancy by spending a year "working with sharecroppers in Fayette County" and by participating in (and being badly beaten) the demonstrations at Monroe, North Carolina.[1] The transition from a college-based student organization to a full-time paid staff of militants had begun.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 60.

Voter Registration: The Beginnings

Robert Parris Moses, the first SNCC worker to become engaged in voter registration, grew up in Harlem.[2] He majored in philosophy in Hamilton College in New York State, then received a Master's degree in philosophy from Harvard in 1957. After teaching mathematics at Horace Mann High School in New York for two years, Moses was attracted to the South by the sit-ins. He spent the summer of 1960 in Atlanta working for SNCC, then he made a trip through Mississippi to recruit people for the October SNCC conference in Atlanta. On this trip he met Amzie Moore, Negro head of the NAACP in Cleveland, Mississippi, and Moore convinced Moses he should return and lead a voter registration campaign.[3] Moses returned to Mississippi in July, 1961, and, at the suggestion of C.C. Bryant, an NAACP official in McComb, Moses began his campaign there.[1] Moses, then, was already in Mississippi and beginning work on voter registration when SNCC decided at its August meeting at the Highlander Folk School to establish a voting registration division.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Biographical information from SNCC, pp. 62-64. Robert Moses dropped his last name and is now called Robert Parris in order to avoid a cult of personality.

[3] Ibid., p. 64.

The clash between SNCC and the State of Mississippi came quickly. By August 7, 1961, SNCC had started a voter registration school for Negroes in Pike County. Sixteen Negroes tried to register, six successfully.[2] This success encouraged Negroes in the neighboring counties, Amite and Walthall, to ask for registration schools. In late August a school was established in Amite on the farm of an NAACP member, E.W. Steptoe, and on August 29 there was an attempt to register led by Robert Moses. The attempt failed. Moses was stopped and beaten by a local white, Billy Jack Caston, and eight stitches were required to close the wounds on his head.[3] Robert Moses then broke local custom by charging the white with assault and battery, but to no avail as Caston was acquitted in a courtroom packed with armed whites.[4]

Meanwhile Marion Barry, one of the direct action faction of SNCC, had arrived in McComb on August 18 in order to prepare for direct action protests. The first occurred on August 26, 1961, when two volunteers sat-in at the Woolworth lunch counter in McComb. Each was given thirty days in jail.[5] Despite the severe penalty, more local Negroes began to participate. In a meeting attended by some two hundred people, it was decided to make further attempts at both desegregation and voter registration. Brenda Travis, a fifteen year old high school student, and five of her friends made the next challenge to the system, a sit-in in McComb. The reaction was harsh. Brenda's friends were sentenced to eight months in jail; Brenda, being younger, was sentenced to a year in a state school for delinquents and was expelled from school.[1] SNCC activities continued, however, with Robert Moses and Travis Britt taking four local Negroes back to Liberty where Moses had been beaten in an attempt to register. This time Britt was beaten and again no one was registered.[2] Two days later John Hardy, head of the SNCC voter registration school in neighboring Walthall County, was beaten with a pistol by the registrar of that county. For this beating Hardy was then charged with inciting to riot and resisting arrest. In this case, however, the Justice Department successfully brought suit to block the charge.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p.66.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 68.

[4] Ibid., p. 69.

[5] Ibid., p. 68.

The effect of these incidents was felt immediately. Robert Moses summed it up. "Well, the Travis Britt incident, followed by the John Hardy incident . . . just about cleaned us out. The farmers in both those counties were no longer willing to go down /to register/."[4] Despite slackening civil rights activity, white violence increased. John Doar of the Justice Department was warned of threats against three men by a local segregationist, E. H. Hurst, at a meeting on September 24, 1961, at the home of E. W. Steptoe. One of the men threatened, Herbert Lee, was murdered the next day.[5] In the following nights Robert Moses found three Negro witnesses of the murder--each claimed Hurst had done it--but they were unwilling to testify in court to what they saw.[1] Finally one of the three, Louis Allen, offered to testify if given protection. Moses called the Justice Department in an attempt to get that protection. "We talked to responsible officials in that department. They told us that there was no way possible to provide protection for a witness at such a hearing and that probably in any case it didn't matter what he testified--that Hurst would be found innocent."[2] Allen, under coercion, had testified at the coroner's jury hearing that Hurst had acted in self-defense. The Justice Department's inability to protect Allen destroyed his willingness to repudiate that testimony, but that did not end the matter. Half a year later a deputy sheriff broke Allen's jaw with a flashlight after telling Allen that he knew he had told the F. B. I. a different story than he had told the jury.[3] Moses commented: "It's for reasons like these that we believe the local F. B. I. are sometimes in collusion with the local sheriffs and chiefs of police, and that Negro witnesses aren't safe in telling inside information to local agents of the F. B. I."[4] Allen's story ended on January 31, 1964, with the discovery of his shotgun-blasted lifeless body.[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 69.

[2] Ibid., p. 70.

[3] Ibid., p. 71.

[4] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

[5] Ibid., p. 72. Compare Newfield, p. 57.

Herbert Lee's murder in September, 1961, had probably cost Allen his life two and a half years later. But the terror had never stopped. In October, 1961, Paul Potter and Tom Hayden of the Students for a Democratic Society were beaten in McComb. In November F. B. I. agents stood by and took notes as four CORE members were beaten for trying to desegregate a lunch counter in the Greyhound bus station. In that same month a shotgun was fired into the bedroom of two SNCC workers. And the whites of McComb ended the year by beating three newspapermen and three CORE members. SNCC's invasion of McComb and the surrounding area in the fall and winter of 1961, designed to register Negro voters and integrate public facilities, accomplished neither. It did stir local Negro participation, but that participation dwindled away after the harsh and violent white reaction.[1]

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[1] Zinn, pp. 72-74.

[2] Ibid., p. 74.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

Mississippi, 1962-1963

Early in 1962 Robert Moses and other SNCC people moved north from McComb into the Delta. Moses went to Jackson which became, for a while, the center of operations. And COFO, the Council of Federated Organizations, a co-operative effort by SNCC, CORE, SCLC and NAACP to register Negro voters in Mississippi, was formed at the suggestion of Moses and Tom Gaither of CORE. The COFO effort was financed, in part, by the Taconic and Field Foundations, and it was administered by the Southern Regional Council in Atlanta.[2] The winter was spent in preparation for the summer campaign.

The initial registration and protest activities in Mississippi had been defeated by violence and police harassment. Economic coercion and intimidation without violence supplemented these techniques in some parts of the state. Frank Smith, a SNCC worker in Holly Springs, reported in July, 1962, that:

> . . . we are dealing with very subtle problems here, not one of shootings and hangings, but of lowering of cotton acreage allotments and the raising of taxes. The Chancery Court sells the land for taxes and the farmer is forced to move. In the meantime the banks refuse to give him a

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1. From SNCC, pp. 77-78. 2. Ibid., pp. 79-81.

> loan...Here we have the problem of the sheriff riding by a place where meetings are being held and writing down the tag numbers. The next week, any person at the meeting who does public work is fired...[1]

Only by comparison with violence could this type of economic coercion be termed subtle, but it added an intimidation more difficult to prove and less dramatic to the outsider than the physical violence so often used to combat SNCC efforts in Mississippi.

In the summer of 1962 SNCC people pressed their challenge in Holly Springs, Laurel, Hattiesburg, Greenville, Cleveland, Vicksburg and Ruleville. Greenwood, however, became the center of SNCC efforts.[2] SNCC's leader in Greenwood, Sam Block, suffered the usual harassments. On one occasion he was beaten by three whites, on another a speeding truck nearly ran him down, on a third Block, Lawrence Guyot, and another SNCC worker barely escaped a lynch mob by climbing out the window of their office, across a roof and down a television antenna pole just as the mob was breaking into the office.[3] Despite the danger involved, SNCC workers stayed on. They were, in the words of Robert Moses: "breaking down the psychological feeling on the part of the Negroes that these boys are just coming in here, they're going to be in here for a short time, and then they're going to leave, and we're going to be left holding the bag."[4]

When Greenwood Negroes became convinced that Sam Block and his friends were not going to be driven out by white threats and violence, they began to respond to the SNCC voting registration campaign. Their success was limited, however. At the end of six months only five Negroes had been added to the

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1. _Ibid_., p. 82. 2. _Ibid_., pp. 82-83.

3. _Ibid_., pp. 83-85. 4. _Ibid_., p. 85.

voting rolls.[1] Then in October, 1962, white officials retaliated (in the SNCC view) for the stream of Negro registration applicants by ending distribution of government surplus foods in Leflore County. This move denied food to some 22,000 people, mainly Negroes, who had come to rely on this program during the unemployed winter season.[2] By January, 1963, Sam Block thought the food situation was getting desperate, so SNCC appealed for help from its friends around the country. Even before that appeal, in late December, two Negro Michigan State University students attempted to drive a truck load of food into Mississippi. They were stopped in Clarksdale, charged with possessing narcotics (aspirin and vitamins, according to Howard Zinn), and their load was confiscated.[3] One of the two, Ivanhoe Donaldson, returned to the road after his eleven day jail stay and eventually delivered twelve loads of food and medicine.[4] By February, 1963, SNCC was heavily committed to the food program. On February 20th over six hundred people lined up for SNCC food.[5] Sam Block, SNCC's leader in Greenwood, was arrested the same day and over a hundred Negroes protested his arrest in Greenwood's first mass Negro demonstration.[6] Again, white retaliation was swift. Three SNCC workers leaving town were overtaken by a car full of whites and fired at. The SNCC car was riddled with thirteen 45-caliber bullets, but only two struck home, critically but not fatally wounding the driver, Jimmy Travis. The other two SNCC workers, Robert Moses and Randolph Blackwell, were uninjured.[7] CORE, SNCC and NAACP leaders requested federal protection for civil rights workers because of the shooting. That protection was not forthcoming.[1] The civil rights organizations responded by focusing their efforts on Greenwood for the next year.[2] Greenwood reacted, in turn, in what had become a typical pattern. In quick succession, a carload of SNCC people was blasted by shotguns from a passing car, then the SNCC office was burned down and finally, on March 26, a shotgun blast was fired into the home of George Greene, a SNCC worker. Fortunately, no one was hurt in any of these incidents.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 86.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 87.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 88.

[6] Ibid., p. 89.

[7] Ibid.

Meanwhile, the violence in Greenwood in the spring and early summer of 1963 was matched by terroristic white violence in other parts of the state. Aaron Henry, NAACP leader in Clarksdale, faced a steady stream of attacks. First the windows of his drugstore were broken, next explosives were tossed into his home through an open window, then an explosion damaged his drugstore, and finally men in a passing car fired into his home. Aaron Henry continued to work for civil rights for Negroes. In Holmes County the first Negro voter applicant's home was firebombed. Robert Moses and three other SNCC workers were viewed by local police as logical suspects and were arrested on suspicion of arson. Back in Greenwood a policeman clubbed down a SNCC worker. In Jackson a student sitting-in at a lunch counter was beaten and kicked, an NAACP official was clubbed during a demonstration, and finally, on June 12, 1963, Medgar Evers, head of the NAACP in Mississippi, was shot to death in the driveway of his home.[4]

The SNCC attack on segregation and discrimination in Mississippi, though ineffective in breaking down the pattern of segregation in public accommodations and the exclusion of Negroes from politics, did begin to produce some response among Mississippi Negroes. The most notable single example was Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, a sharecropper in Ruleville until she encountered SNCC. Following a meeting at which James Forman and James Bevel urged voter registration, Mrs. Hamer made an attempt on the last day of August, 1962, to add her name to the rolls. She was unsuccessful and the consequences of her effort illustrate the dangers that confronted any Negro challenging the Mississippi system of segregation at that time. Upon returning from her futile effort to register, her employer of eighteen years told her that she would have to leave his land. Ten days later sixteen shots were fired into the room in which she lay sleeping. She escaped that attack uninjured and undaunted but she was not so fortunate the following June. Arrested at the site of a sit-in, Mrs. Hamer was taken to jail and beaten severely with a blackjack by Negro prisoners at the urging of a state policeman.[1] SNCC worker Lawrence Guyot, responding to a telephoned call for assistance, came to help if possible, but he too ran afoul of the state police when he refused to say "Yes, sir" and "No, sir" as directed. Reacting to this lack of respect, one state trooper slapped Guyot repeatedly, then turned him over to members of the Citizens Council. They, in turn, "beat him until he couldn't lift his arms, hit him again and again in his face until his eyes were so swollen he couldn't open them."[2] Yet neither Mrs. Hamer nor Guyot quit their civil rights activity. In time Mrs. Hamer became one of the most dramatic spokesmen against the segregation system; Lawrence Guyot became head of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 90. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*, p. 91. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 91-93.

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1. _Ibid_., p. 94. 2. _Ibid_., p. 95.

Georgia, 1961-1963

SNCC, after the first waves of sit-ins in 1960 and 1961, concentrated much of its effort on the hard core of resistance in Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama. Howard Zinn, white adviser, historian, and publicist of SNCC, argues that: "It has been the particular contribution of SNCC to American democracy to move into long-formant areas of the Deep South, to arouse Negroes there from quiescence to revolt, and, in so doing, to disturb the conscience of the entire nation."[1] This was the pattern, Zinn argued, in Albany, Georgia. In the fall of 1961 Charles Sherrod and Cordell Reagan, "veterans of the sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, and McComb," set up a voter registration office in Albany. Within two months:

> Albany was the scene of unprecedented mass arrests in the first large-scale Negro uprising since the Montgomery bus boycott. It became the prototype of other cities throughout the nation. It represented a permanent turn from the lunch counter and the bus terminal to the streets, from hit-and-run attacks by students and professional civil rights workers to populist rebellion by lower-class Negroes. And the Albany crisis revealed clearly for the first time the reluctance of the national government to protect constitutional rights in the Deep South.[2]

At first the Negroes in Albany were afraid to register, afraid to get involved with the "Freedom Riders." Sherrod remembers that Negroes "would go across the street from us, because they were afraid. . . . Many of the ministers were afraid to let us use their churches, afraid that their churches would be bombed. . . ."[3] Reagan and Sherrod were confronted by a massive fear that had to be defeated before there could be participation in protests by local people. "We thought and we thought...and the students were the answer."[1] Once again SNCC turned from fearful and vulnerable adults, tied down by their families and jobs, to young students having fewer responsibilities who were less dependent on the local white community. Albany State College for Negroes provided most of the students. Once the movement had begun, local ministers joined in and gave facilities and assistance.

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 125.

On November 1, 1961, SNCC tested integration of the bus station--unsuccessfully.[2] On November 22 various local groups joined with SNCC to form the Albany Movement and the same day Albany State students again tried,and failed, to desegregate the bus terminal. The two students who made the test, Bertha Gober and Blanton Hall, were then expelled from Albany State College. Students reacted by protesting the expulsion, but some who did lost their campus jobs. On December 10, 1961, four SNCC workers and seven volunteers tried a third time to desegregate the bus terminals. Albany Police Chief Laurie Pritchett arrested them as they left the terminal. These arrests led to mass protest marches, but Chief Pritchett halted them by arresting over three hundred demonstrators. He explained that: "We can't tolerate the NAACP or the SNCC or any other nigger organization to take over this town with mass demonstrations."[3]

The Albany Movement countered Chief Pritchett's actions by inviting Martin Luther King and Ralph Abernathy to come to Albany. King and Abernathy came, spoke, and then led 257 marchers to the courthouse where all were arrested. These arrests, which more than filled the jails, forced Chief Pritchett to send some of his prisoners to nearby counties, but space was found for all 737 civil rights workers. By now, though, the mass arrests and the presence of Dr. King had created nationwide publicity for Albany, much of it quite unfavorable, and negotiations, previously scorned, were begun. A verbal agreement was quickly reached calling for the city to desegregate train and bus facilities, release most of the demonstrators on bond, and listen to Negro complaints at the next business meeting of the new city commission. Negroes were to halt further demonstrations.[1]

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 127. The following account of the Albany Movement is taken from SNCC, pp. 127-136.

[3] Ibid., p. 130.

The agreement quickly fell apart. In late December a young Negro girl was arrested after refusing to move to the rear of a local bus. The Albany Movement countered with a boycott that eventually forced the line out of business. Meanwhile SNCC workers Sherrod and Charles Jones were arrested for trying to integrate the Trailways lunchroom and the new city commission rejected the proposals of the Albany Movement. That organization then added to its boycott of the bus lines a boycott of local businesses that did not hire Negroes. That led to the arrest of a number of the picketers, and those arrests were followed by the death of a Negro cafe operator, killed by a policeman who claimed he acted in self-defense. The SNCC view was captured in Howard Zinn's statement that: "Southwest Georgia had a long history of policemen killing Negroes for 'resisting arrest.'"[2] Then, in July of 1962, Martin Luther King and Ralph Abernathy were called back for trial on the charges filed in December. They were found guilty and sentenced to forty-five days in jail. The defense attorney asked for the legal citations on which the decision was based. Recorder Court Judge Durden replied that he didn't have any citations, but the decision was based on "general research of the law."[1] Dr. King and Rev. Abernathy decided to protest the decision by choosing to serve the jail sentence rather than paying the fine which was the alternative. This decision, designed to dramatize the Albany situation and bring national pressure to bear on the city, was frustrated when King and Abernathy were ejected from jail over their strong protests. It was explained to them that an "unidentified man" had paid their fines. There are several logical explanations of the identity of that mystery man, but Howard Zinn implies that he was an agent of Washington.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 131.

[2] Ibid., p. 134.

The Albany Movement continued its pressure through the summer. Segregation was attacked through the courts and by direct action. Hundreds more were arrested. Some whites turned to violence. Mrs. Slater King, then pregnant, was knocked unconscious by a deputy sheriff while visiting people in the Camilla Jail. Her baby, when delivered, was dead. Bill Hansen, a white worker for SNCC, had his jaw broken in another jail. C. B. King, an Albany attorney, was beaten with a cane by Dougherty County Sheriff Cull Campbell. Howard Zinn asked the sheriff about it and reports that he was told: "Yeh, I knocked hell out of the son-of-a-bitch, and I'll do it again. I wanted to let him know . . . I'm a white man and he's a damn nigger."[3] And sixteen-year-old Shirley Gaines was dragged down a flight of stairs and kicked repeatedly by the police officer arresting her for attempting to enter a white bowling alley.[4]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 135.

[4] Ibid.

The pattern of protest and repression set in 1961 and 1962 continued in Albany through 1963 and into 1964. During this entire period there were demonstrations, boycotts, arrests, court actions and acts of violence against the Negro community. Howard Zinn summarizes the role of the federal government in these years:

> Through more than three years of conflict and pain in Albany, the national government failed again and again to defend the constitutional liberties of Negroes in that city. By restricting its activity to a few ineffective court appearances the Department of Justice left the rights of Albany citizens in the hands of Police Chief Pritchett, who crushed them time after time, while managing to maintain his image in the national press as a prudent keeper of order in Albany.[1]

Albany, Georgia, was certainly a testimony to Negro courage and determination, to white intransigence, and, in the SNCC view at least, to federal unwillingness to protect the constitutional rights of colored citizens in the South. In these respects SNCC's experience in Georgia paralleled its experience in Mississippi and the legacy was an increasingly bitter and skeptical view of America, North and South.

Freedom Summer, 1964

By the end of 1963 SNCC had been engaged in voter registration, direct action and community organization in the Deep South for two full years. It had chosen to focus its efforts on the very citadels of Southern resistance--Mississippi, Alabama, and Southwest Georgia--and its efforts had failed to register more than a handful of Negro citizens or desegregate more than a token few public accommodations in those areas. There was no lack of either courage or persistance in SNCC's efforts; its failure, then, was a measure of the technique employed and the counter-measures of white segregationists. In this confrontation nonviolent direct action and community organization had failed to either convert or coerce the whites into an acceptable treatment of the Negro community. Whites, who effectively controlled political power, the courts and the police, were able to employ all agencies of the state and local governments--and sometimes locally controlled arms of the federal government (food programs, acreage allotments)--to intimidate and suppress civil rights activity. With the state and local governments' implied or open support, and with arms of the federal government often neutralized, white citizens were able to engage in all sorts of violence and intimidation without fear of punishment. Robert Moses, who had led the SNCC assault on Mississippi, stated the problem in April, 1964. There was no hope for justice in Mississippi, he argued, "without the massive aid of the country as a whole, backed by the power and authority of the federal government."[1] Nonviolence alone was not enough. "Negro efforts to win the right to vote cannot succeed against the extensive legal weapons and police powers of local and state officials without a nationwide mobilization of support."[2] The Council of Federated Organizations, COFO, which was largely staffed and controlled by SNCC, decided in November, 1963, to bring about a confrontation between Mississippi and the nation.

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[1] Ibid., p. 136.

The Setting

In late summer and fall, 1963, COFO organized a mock gubernatorial election to parallel the regular Mississippi Democratic primary from which

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[1] William McCord, Mississippi: The Long, Hot Summer (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 15. Referred to hereafter as Mississippi.

[2] Ibid.

Negroes were excluded. Negroes all over the state "registered" and then "voted" in this mock election. Aaron Henry, the Negro candidate, received 70,000 votes and swamped the regular Democratic party candidates in this election. This parallel election demonstrated that Negroes were interested in voting and much of the credit for its success was attributed to one hundred volunteers from Yale and Stanford who had come to Mississippi for two weeks to help the registration.[1] With the election completed, a few SNCC workers began to think of using the same technique on a larger scale with thousands of volunteers from outside the state in the following summer. Only a week after the mock election in November, 1963, SNCC staff members met in Greenville to discuss policy for the coming year.

Preliminary Planning: Racial Tensions Within SNCC

The mock gubernatorial election had been a success, in good part, because of the efforts of the one hundred volunteers from Stanford and Yale. Nevertheless their aid had raised problems and tensions between veteran SNCC members, mostly black, and the volunteers, mostly white. SNCC was, officially, interracial, but it was also a predominantly Negro organization, and the influx of white volunteers had changed this and threatened the position of Negroes on the staff. Thus the November SNCC meeting in Greenville turned into a discussion of the role of whites in the movement. On the second day Robert Moses acted as chairman and the discussion again centered, much of the time, on the role of whites. The arguments used are reported by Howard Zinn and Len Holt, both present at the meeting.

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[1] Len Holt, The Summer That Didn't End (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1965), pp. 35-36.

There was, according to Zinn, "grumbling among Negro staff members that some of the white students had rushed into leadership positions, they had come quickly, gotten publicity, and left."[1] Both Zinn and Holt report that four or five Negro staff members urged severe restrictions on any white volunteers brought into the state.[2] Howard Zinn summarizes their arguments as follows:

> For whites to talk to Mississippi Negroes about voter registration, they said, only reinforced the Southern Negro's tendency to believe that whites *were* superior. Whites tended to take over leadership roles in the movement, thus preventing Southern Negroes from being trained to lead. Why didn't whites just work in the white Southern community? One man noted that in Africa the new nations were training black Africans to take over all important government positions. Another told of meeting a Black Muslim in Atlanta who warned him that whites were taking over the movement. "I had this feeling inside. I felt that what he said was true."[3]

These arguments, in which Ella Baker and Len Holt detected something akin to black nationalism,[4] were answered by other staff members. Lawrence Guyot thought "a lot of Negroes in Mississippi meeting a lot of white people, on a human individual to human individual relationship" would have a good effect.[5] Mrs. Hamer argued that: "If we're trying to break down this barrier of segregation, we can't segregate ourselves."[6] And Robert Moses, greatly admired leader of SNCC's challenge to Mississippi, argued that: "My feeling has been that the type of person you have is much more important than whether he is white or not."[7] The Mississippi movement should be integrated, Moses continued, "because otherwise we'll grow up and have a racist movement."[1] Negroes, he siad, must break down the idea that they can rely completely on their own efforts: "And the only way you can break that down is to have white people working alongside of you, so then it changes the whole complexion of what you're doing, so it isn't any longer Negro fighting white, it's a question of rational people against irrational people."[2] Howard Zinn reports that at this point someone broke in to say: "...but shouldn't there be *something* in American society where Negroes could lead?" Robert Moses closed the discussion at midnight by his reply: "I always thought that the one thing we can do for the country that no one else can do is to be above the race issue."[3] For the time being interracialism had triumphed over its first major challenge within SNCC. With the problem of race in the movement settled, SNCC went ahead with plans to invite large numbers of students--a thousand or two--to Mississippi for the summer of 1964.[4]

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[1] *SNCC*, p. 187.

[2] *Ibid*., see also Holt, p. 36.

[3] *SNCC*, p. 187.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 186; Holt, p. 36.

[5] *SNCC*, p. 187.

[6] *Ibid*., p. 188.

[7] *Ibid*.

Design for the Summer Project

COFO sent out a "Prospectus For The Mississippi Freedom Summer" that described the aims and proposed activities of the project. Len Holt, made the unofficial historian of the project by Staughton Lynd, coordinator of the freedom schools,[5] attributes the unsigned prospectus to Robert Moses.[6] The prospectus calls for a massive effort by hundreds, and defends the size of the effort in the following terms:

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[1] *Ibid*. [2] *Ibid*., pp. 188-189. [3] *Ibid*., p. 189. [4] *Ibid*., p. 187

[5] See Holt, p. 12. [6] *Ibid*., pp. 47-48.

> Why a project of this size?
> 1. Projects of the size of those of the last three summers (100 to 150 workers) are rendered ineffective quickly by police threats and detention of members.
> 2. Previous projects have gotten no national publicity on the crucial issue of voting rights and, hence, have little national support either from public opinion or from the federal government. A large number of students from the North making the necessary sacrifices to go South would make abundantly clear to the government and the public that this is not a situation which can be ignored any longer, and would project an image of cooperation between Northern and white people and Southern Negro people to the nation which will reduce fears of an impending race war.
> 3. Because of the lack of numbers in the past, all workers in Mississippi have had to devote themselves to voter registration, leaving no manpower for stopgap community education projects which can reduce illiteracy as well as raise the level of education of Negroes. Both of these activities are, naturally, essential to the project's emphasis on voting.
> 4. Bail money cannot be provided for jailed workers; hence, a large number of people going South would prevent the project from being halted in its initial stages by immediate arrests. Indeed, what will probably happen in some communities is the filling of jails with civil rights workers to overflowing, forcing the community to realize that it cannot dispense with the problem of Negroes' attempting to register simply by jailing "outsiders."[1]

The choice of the summer of 1964 for the project was explained as follows:

> Either the civil rights struggle has to continue, as it has for the past few years, with small projects in selected communities with no real progress on any fronts, or there must be a task force of such a size as to force either the state and the municipal governments to change their social and legal structures, or the federal government to intervene on behalf of the constitutional rights of its citizens.
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> Since 1964 is an election year, the clear-cut issue of voting rights should be brought out in the open. Many SNCC and CORE workers in Mississippi hold the view that Negroes will never vote in large numbers until federal marshals intervene. At any rate, many Americans must be

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1. The entire prospectus is reprinted in Holt, Appendix II: "COFO and the Summer Project," pp. 197-203. This particular citation is from pp. 197-198.

> made to realize that the voting rights they so often take for granted involve considerable risk for Negroes in the South.[1]

And the project was worthwhile because: "Major victories in Mississippi, recognized as the stronghold of racial intolerance in the South, would speed immeasurably the breaking down of legal and social discrimination in both North and South."[2]

The major elements of the project were, first, voter registration on both the official Mississippi rolls and a "Freedom Registration" designed to "serve as the basis of a challenge of the official books of the state and the validity of 'official' elections this fall," and second, "Freedom Schools" designed to "introduce him /the student/ to his particularly 'Negro' cultural background, and teach him basic literary skills in one integrated problem."[3] The schools were to teach literacy skills while examining particular problems in Mississippi. Specific problems were suggested.

> The whole question of the court system, and the place of law in our lives with many relevant ramifications, can be dealt with in connection with the study of how one civil rights case went through the courts and was ultimately decided in favor of the defendant. The episode of Congressman Jamie Whitten's tractor deal, where Whitten quashed a federal program to train over 2,000 tractor drivers in the Mississippi Delta (because it would have been integrated), can lead one into the whole area of state and federal relations. The campaign of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer for Congress (running against Jamie Whitten) provides a basis for studying all the forces which are against her, and which have worked against a Negro's even attempting to run for Congress in Mississippi.[4]

A third major goal of the project was to establish community centers for Negroes. These centers were to provide education and recreation of many sorts and also job-training, literacy programs, health programs, libraries, serious movies, art and craft workshops, music appreciation courses, drama and discussion groups, sports and other projects.[1] In addition to the major projects--voter registration, freedom schools, and community centers--COFO planned a number of special projects. These included research into the political and economic life of Mississippi, a legal attack on the Mississippi system and legal advice to Negroes by lawyers and law students, and an experimental project in organizing the white community.[2]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 198.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] *Ibid*., pp. 199-200.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 200.

Preparations for Freedom Summer, 1964

In undertaking the summer project COFO had to find volunteers, secure a training site, get lawyers and doctors and attempt to get federal protection. Thousands of applicants for the project from major university recruiting centers (Howard, Yale, Harvard, Oberlin, Stanford and the state universities of Illinois, Oregon and North Carolina) had to be screened.[3] The National Council of Churches provided a training site and $50,000 for a Delta Project.[4] The National Lawyers Guild and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund provided lawyers.[5] Finally, steps were taken to secure federal protection.

On June 3, 1964, COFO delivered a memorandum on the summer project to members of Congress.[6] The memorandum noted that an appointment was being sought with President Johnson (it was not forthcoming), noted the record of violence against rights workers in Mississippi, noted the state's preparation to repeal the challenge, and requested the aid of members of Congress in protecting their constituents (individual lists were provided).[1] The memorandum urged the Congressmen to ask the Justice Department to take steps to protect the volunteers and it specifically suggested sending United States Marshals (the legal basis for this was cited), informing state and local officials of federal laws "regarding intimidation and harm of citizens of the United States who are exercising their Constitutional rights," and assuring state officials that "prosecution as well as the active use of Federal preventative action before any more names are added to the list of civil rights martyrs. It is to this that we hope you will direct your efforts at this time by urging the Justice Department to take the steps we have outlined."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 202.

[2] Ibid., pp. 202-203.

[3] Ibid., p. 37.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] The entire memorandum is reprinted in Holt, Appendix II, pp. 204-207.

A few days after the memorandum was distributed, a COFO group was sent to Washington to make a personal appeal for federal protection for the rights workers. The President was away from Washington, delivering a commencement address, and the Attorney-General was unavailable.[3] The COFO group, frustrated in its attempt at a direct appeal to the executive, presented its case for federal intervention to an audience of several hundred citizens and Congressmen congregated at the National Theatre a short distance from the White House. There the COFO group recited examples of police intimidation and violence and unanswered complaints to the F. B. I. and the Justice Department. A case for federal intervention was presented. Professor Robert

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 207.

[3] SNCC, p. 242.

J. Harris, for example, cited Ex Parte Siebold, an 1880 Supreme Court decision affirming the power of the federal government to execute its laws "on every foot of American soil."[1] William Higgs, attorney, noted that the F.B.I. was more than an investigative agency when bank robbers were involved and cited the statute giving the F.B.I. power to make arrests. The transcript of the testimony was sent to President Johnson and Attorney-General Kennedy. "There was no response."[2]

The response to the plea for federal protection finally came from John Doar, representative of the Justice Department, to the group of volunteers assembled at the Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio, for training before going to Mississippi. John Doar "mentioned the absence of legislation to enable the federal government to protect anyone, added that the F.B.I. was only an investigative agency, and opened the floor to questions."[3] A Negro asked: "What are you going to do to enable us to see the fall?" And Doar replied: "Nothing. There is no federal police force. The responsibility for protection is that of the local police. We can only investigate."[4] This statement has been bitterly contested many times by friends of the civil rights movement. Howard Zinn, for example, argues that: ". . . there is nothing to prevent either the F.B.I. or federal marshals, if they are on the scene while the violation is taking place (as they have been many times), from arresting the violator on the spot."[5] To support this statement Zinn cites Section 3052, Title 18, of the U.S. Administrative Code which

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[1] Ibid., p. 243.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Holt, p. 50.

[4] Ibid.

[5] SNCC, p. 195.

"was amended in 1951 to give F.B.I. agents the same power which United States Marshals have, to make arrests without warrants 'for any offense against the United States committed in their presence.'"[1] And Zinn adds, bitterly, "Curiously enough, the F.B.I., which makes arrests in kidnapping cases, bank robberies, drug cases, espionage cases, etc., does not make arrests on the spot in civil rights cases. It would appear that not only are Negroes second-class citizens, but that civil rights law is second-class law."[2]

On June 21, 1964, thirteen days after the plea to the President, a week after Doar's statement to the volunteers, the meaning of Doar's response was made clear. On that day James Chaney, eighteen-year-old Negro Mississippian, Michael Schwerner, twenty-five year-old white CORE worker, and Andrew Goodman, twenty-year-old white summer volunteer just arrived from the Oxford, Ohio, training site where he had probably heard Doar's address, were arrested on a traffic charge in Neshoba County, Mississippi, by Deputy Sheriff Cecil Price and two Mississippi highway patrolmen.[3] Attorney Len Holt's description of their situation is a scathing commentary on the meaning of their constitutional rights as interpreted by our federal government:

> When they were arrested, Cecil Price was their god and they were his creation. Only he, Cecil Price, could have mercy on their souls.
>
> Not only was Price god, but he was also the United States of America, the President, the Supreme Court, the Constitution and all the high-sounding principles and mouthings of a nation that is the wealthiest and most powerful country in the history of mankind. Mickey, Chaney and Andy knew

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid. For a fairly complete argument that a legal basis does exist for federal intervention, see SNCC, pp. 192-212. See also Holt, Appendix V: "Federal Directives on Civil Rights Laws," pp. 296-307.

[3] SNCC, p. 243, and Holt, p. 22.

> this at the moment of arrest, when they stood at the gates of eternity. They had been told in unmistakable terms by the United States that their rights to freedom of speech, freedom of association, safety of their persons--and all the other rights--would be protected by local law enforcement agencies, which have the primary responsibility. "There is no federal police force," John Doar of the Justice Department had announced in Oxford, Ohio, at the orientation session.
>
> When they were arrested, what rights they had by reasons of the laws and the Constitution were in the hands of Deputy Price. In accordance with his power and duty of being the United States Constitution, he then dispensed those rights.[1]

In mid-August, a month and a half after the three had disappeared, their bodies were found under the dam of a farm pond. All had been shot; Chaney, the Negro, was also "mutilated by a beating so terrible that the pathologist who examined him said he had only seen such damage in high-velocity accidents such as airplane crashes."[2] After the three disappeared, COFO again requested federal marshals for protection. Attorney General Robert Kennedy ". . . pleaded a lack of constitutional authority under the American federal system. This prompted a group of distinguished law professors, headed by Professor Mark Howe of the Harvard Law School, to issue a statement reprimanding the Attorney General, and pointing to the government's powers in Sections 332 and 333, Title 10 of the U. S. Code. But no protection came."[3]

CORE attorney Len Holt argues that the triple murder "festered itself into a double bitterness among the SNCC and CORE staff."[4] Bitterness, first, because the federal government was so slow to respond in any manner, yet: "It became apparent that a phone call to the Neshoba jail by a federal agent before 9:30 P.M. could have done much to preserve the three lives."[5]

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1. Holt, p. 22.

2. *SNCC*, p. 244.

3. *Ibid*.

4. Holt, p. 28.

5. *Ibid*. The F. B. I. and State Highway Patrol were contacted, but did not respond, at 6 P.M. Holt, p. 23.

Bitterness, second, because they thought they saw a racial meaning in the importance the government and the nation attached to the disappearance of these three. Rita Schwerner, widow of the murdered CORE worker, expressed that feeling: "We all know that this search with hundreds of sailors is because Andrew Goodman and my husband are white. If only Chaney was involved, nothing would've been done."[1] And Len Holt supports the argument: "Her lips spoke a deadly truth; the 80 SNCC and 20 CORE members who had been preparing for the coming of the summer volunteers knew it. Five Negroes are known to have been killed in Mississippi between Janaury and May, 1964, with indifferent silence given to pleas for help."[2]

The summer project, begun with a triple lynching and a federal government reluctant to intervene to protect the workers, brought more than 800 volunteers into the state for the summer.[3] The tripe murder proved only a taste of things to come. White Mississippians resisted the COFO workers with legal and quasi-legal harassment, with economic penalties and with violence of all kinds--beatings, bombings, shootings and arson. Len Holt reports that by "October, 1964, there were 15 murders, 4 woundings, 37 churches bombed or burned to the ground and more than 1,000 arrests."[4] The cases in which the workers were able to get any protection, constitutional or otherwise, from state or local police were the exception, not the rule. (In October, 1967, seven men, Deputy Sheriff Cecil Price was one of them, were convicted of conspiring to deprive Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner of their rights. It was the first major civil rights conviction in Mississippi's post-Reconstruction history. All the other acts of violence committed that summer remain unpunished.) For most purposes, the workers were simply outside the protection of the law that summer while working in an intensely hostile and violent environment.

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[1] Ibid., p. 30. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 43.

[4] Ibid., p. 12. A picture of the terror is presented in a "Running Summary of Incidents," beginning June 16, 1964, and ending August 26, 1964, in Holt, Appendix II, pp. 207-252. Affidavits are included on a number of these incidents. See Holt, pp. 252-268. Holt argues that federal law in Mississippi is indistinguishable from state law and state practice. He is speaking of the judges, the juries, the police (F.B.I.). Holt, pp. 55-75. On a broader scope, dealing with the entire South, the same point is made in specific cases in Leon Friedman, (ed.), Southern Justice (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965). The thesis of the book is established in its first quotation, "In no country but our own is the discreditable fact true that where murder and shocking outrages are perpetrated by a dominant party in a narrow

Freedom Summer, 1964: The Balance Sheet

The prospectus for the summer promised action in voter registration, freedom schools, community centers and several special projects. By the end of the summer a balance sheet could be drawn. The voter registration operated on two levels. On the first, it was an effort to register Negroes to vote in regular Mississippi elections. This effort, in meaningful political terms, was a failure. After a whole summer's work, only a few more than 2,000 Negroes were added to the rolls, not enough to affect the political balance in Mississippi at all.[1] Negroes unable to get on the Mississippi rolls were registered, however, in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, an organization set up to give Negroes a political party parallel to the regular white

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region of country, there is no power of punishment save through the impractical instrument of those who have either committed or sympathized with the crime." Words of a federal judge in Tennessee in 1875, quoted by Mark DeW. Howe of the Harvard Law School in the Foreword, "Our Splendid Bauble," of Southern Justice, p. v.

[1] Figures from Mississippi, p. 119, citing the Southern Regional Council.

Mississippi Democratic Party. This Freedom Democratic Party served as the basis for the challenges to the seating of the regular Mississippi Democrats at the 1964 Presidential nominating convention and in the newly elected House of Representatives. The thousands of names added to those already registered in the Freedom Ballot of November, 1963, provided a firm basis for the challenges in the convention and Congress, so on this second level the summer's registration effort was a success.

The Freedom Schools, unlike the attempt to register the Negroes to vote, could be termed a success. The prospectus for the summer had called for about twenty-five schools with about fifty students each.[1] In fact, by the end of the summer there were fifty schools and about 3,000 students.[2] Originally the schools were intended only for high school students, by the end of the summer they were attended by young and old as well.[3] The curriculum of the schools varied from place to place depending on the interests and capabilities of both teachers and students. Some of the topics taught were French, typing, reading, writing and basic mathematics. In addition, about half of each school day was spent trying to develop leaderhsip among the students. This consisted, in part, of an attempt to provide a framework for the analysis by the student of his life, society and his state's political structure. The basis for this analysis was provided by Noel Day's *Curriculum Guide for Freedom Schools*, though his guide, prepared for Boston, had to be modified for Mississippi.[4] The materials used are instructive for what they reveal about the attitudes of those who used them and for the view of the world they attempted to impart to their students.

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[1] Holt, p. 199. [2] Holt, p. 107.

[3] *Ibid*. [4] *Ibid*., p. 112.

The Mississippi version of Day's Curriculum was divided into seven units:

1. Comparison of the student's reality with that of others. (the way the students live and the way others live).
2. North to Freedom? (The Negro in the North).
3. Examining the apparent reality (the "better lives" that whites live).
4. Introducing the Power Structure.
5. The poor Negro and the poor white.
6. Material things versus soul things.
7. The Movement.[1]

The first unit used a mimeographed pamphlet describing Nazi Germany and the accommodation to its terror by the Jews as a basis for discussion. The unit was designed to "provoke questions" and "discussions of similarities in the attitudes of the Negro toward the power structure of Mississippi and the attitude and adjustment of the Jews to the power structure of Hitler's Germany."[2] The purpose of the second unit, "North to Freedom?," was to convince the Mississippi Negroes that the North was no heaven and that they should stay and resist in Mississippi where they were a larger portion of the population.[3] The first part of the argument was strongly supported by the riots in Harlem, Rochester, Jersey City and Philadelphia that summer. The third unit compared white and Negro lives, stressed that many poor whites lived no better than many Negroes, and emphasized the shortcomings--tensions, insecurity, hypocrisy--of middle-class life in America.[4] The unit on the "Power Structure" taught that most whites, as well as most Negroes, were without real power, that: ". . . not all white people had a voice in running either the state or the county--that, in fact, there were just a few: the sheriff, the banker, the large-plantation owner, the northern-based corporation owning a local factory."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 113.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 114.

[4] Ibid., p. 115.

The community centers, the third major division of the summer project, were established in a number of communities, ordinarily in conjunction with the Freedom Schools, and they offered a variety of services--day care of children, recreation programs, libraries, reading programs, taped lectures or traveling lecturers. When Staughton Lynd and Tom Wahman, original co-ordinators of the community centers, went back to their respective universities in the fall, their place was taken by Mrs. Liz Fusco, who had been in charge of the Indianola freedom school in the summer.[2] A description of the activities of Meridian in September gives a hint of the variety at these centers: "Good integration of freedom school and community center activities: a theatre group, citizenship seminars, book discussion, individual tutorial, etc. There is a sculptor there who will be traveling around the state, spending about two or three weeks in each project; under his direction the kids are doing '*wild sculpturing*.'"[3] These centers offered facilities for learning and recreation that were ordinarily denied Mississippi Negroes. Their libraries, for example, though small, were still more than was made available to them by the state or local government with their segregated libraries (often for whites only).

Two of the special projects of the summer deserve some mention. The first, the Free Southern Theater, was an experiment in drama featuring an integrated company of eight performers who toured Mississippi presenting Martin

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 122.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 124.

Duberman's In White America. This play, an historical treatment of the state of Negroes in America, is reported to have received an enthusiastic reception for "telling it like it really is."[1] More important, perhaps, was the attempt to organize whites in Mississippi.

The "White Folks" special summer project was the offspring of Sam Shirah, a white SNCC worker whose previous function had been organization of white college students. SNCC, at its birth, had been an organization composed mainly of Negro college students. By the fall of 1963 it had shifted its attention from the campus to the Negro community. Sam Shirah suggested that he parallel this movement by shifting his attention to the organization of white communities. SNCC agreed.[2] The effort became a part of the summer 1964 project and Shirah recruited some twenty-five white volunteers to help him. Seven of these volunteers were assigned to four cities--Jackson, Greenville, Meridian and Vicksburg--where they worked with middle-class moderates to save public education. Their work, Len Holt reports, mainly consisted of mailing literature.[3]

The other volunteers were concentrated in Biloxi. Arriving on July 1, 1964, they concentrated at first on building contacts with white ministers, professional people and businessmen. They received no encouragement from these groups.[4] As one of the volunteers, Charles Smith, commented: "Seems that the scaredest white men in the state are the business and professional people. They've just enough of nothing to think that they have something."[5]

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1. Ibid., p. 83. 2. Ibid., pp. 136-137.

3. Ibid., p. 137. 4. Ibid. 5. Ibid., p. 138.

At the end of July the group retreated to the Highlander Folk Center in Tennessee to evaluate their efforts. Under the leadership of Myles Horton, director of the center, some decided they had concentrated their efforts in the wrong place. Ten returned to Biloxi to concentrate on organization of poor whites.[1]

> For three weeks, a dozen or so persons, in integrated and nonintegrated teams, canvassed in the poor white neighborhoods of the city. At worst they were told to leave. At best they were offered some beverage--soft or hard--and talked with for as long as two hours in some homes. There was no kicking down the steps or threats of violence anywhere. Almost everywhere there was curiosity . . . even when there were situations of "racial baiting."[2]

By late August when the team left to attend the Democratic National Convention, they had gotten twenty whites to sign the Freedom Registration forms (for a total of twenty-two whites in the state) and they had persuaded two additional Mississippi whites to take an active part in the civil rights work.[3] Len Holt concluded that there were few "immediate tangible gains"[4] from the project, but he held out hope for the future based in part on the reaction to the integrated teams.

> In many ways the reports from the pilot project showed that canvassing was more effective when integrated teams did it. There was less of the charges of "communist" by those being canvassed, and the dialogue was refreshingly healthier as many of the white persons talked with a Negro for the first time in their lives rather than at him. The importance of this arises from the fact that SNCC insists that the organization of white persons in Mississippi take place in a setting which emphasizes the problems of the disinherited of both races.[5]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 132.

[3] Ibid., pp. 133-134.

[4] Ibid., p. 142.

[5] Ibid., p. 134. William McCord, sociologist author of The Springtime of Freedom and Mississippi: The Long, Hot Summer, argues in the latter that the hope for an alliance of poor whites and Negroes in Mississippi is a "naive Marxist preconception" that ignores the lessons of history. See Mississippi, pp. 203-204.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party

Perhaps the major achievement of the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964 was the creation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, a theoretically integrated party paralleling the regular Mississippi Democratic Party, which laid the foundation for challenging the regular party at the Democratic National Convention, in Congress and before the American people. This parallel party developed outside the regular party because of the failure of SNCC and other civil rights workers to register Negroes to vote in Mississippi. The first step toward the formation of the parallel party was taken in November, 1963, when a Freedom Ballot was held in which Negroes, excluded from the regular political processes of the state, could register their own opinion concerning gubernatorial candidates. For this purpose Aaron Henry and Rev. Edwin King ran for Governor and Lieutenant Governor respectively against the regular Republican and Democratic candidates. Some 93,000 Negroes voted in this mock election, proving that Negroes would vote if given the opportunity.[1]

The success of the November, 1963, ballot encouraged SNCC to develop the idea of a parallel party further and at the Atlanta SNCC meeting in February, 1964, it was decided to challenge the seating of the traditional Mississippi Democratic Party at the National Democratic Convention in August. The basis of the challenge was to be the claim that the interracial Mississippi Democratic Party (MFDP) was the legitimate representative of the people of Mississippi.[2] The idea of challenging the regular Democrats gained ground when George Ballis and two others were able to get a resolution supporting the challenge from the California Democratic Council on February 23, 1964.[1] Robert Moses gained additional support in Washington when Joseph Rauh, an important figure in the Americans for Democratic Action, general counsel for the United Auto Workers, and a leading Democrat, pledged his assistance.[2] The offer was considered important because of Rauh's connections and the possibility that he might gain United Auto Workers' money for the project. The money was not forthcoming.[3] Rauh did offer to act as counsel for the MFDP for no fee and this offer was accepted.[4] Rauh suggested that in order to gain legal standing the MFDP should attempt to participate in precinct, county and state Democratic conventions and, when denied participation, follow parallel procedures as closely as possible.[5] This strategy was followed. The early strategy also called for Bayard Rustin to organize tens of thousands of demonstrators who would go to the convention and ensure that the challenge could not be ignored by the party leaders or the nation. This plan was not carried through.[6]

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[1] Holt, p. 153.

[2] Ibid., p. 154.

The MFDP held its first rally on April 26, 1964. Only two hundred people attended, a disappointment, but organization went ahead and Lawrence Guyot of SNCC was elected chairman.[7] By May four MFDP candidates--Fannie Lou Hamer, Victoria Gray, John Cameron and James Monroe Houston--had qualified to run in the regular Democratic party primary of June 2, 1964. They were defeated in that nearly lily-white election, but thousands of names were added to the rolls of the MFDP in the meantime.[1] Meanwhile, the MFDP was gaining support outside the state. On June 13 the Americans for Democratic Action called for "rejection of the racist Mississippi Democratic Delegation" and support of the "integrated Freedom Democratic Party."[2] The following day the Michigan Democratic Convention adopted a resolution supporting the MFDP and on June 15 the New York delegation did the same.[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 155.

[3] Ibid., p. 156.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 157. Rustin did not deliver the demonstrators. Holt, p. 164.

[7] Ibid., p. 158.

Joseph Rauh had advised the MFDP to participate, if possible, in the Regular Democratic Party's nomination of delegates to the National Convention. Any effort to prevent registered Negro voters from participating in the regular party's deliberations would, of course, be compelling evidence to use against the delegation to the national convention. The registered Negroes had no difficulty amassing the evidence. They discovered, in fact, that even Mississippi whites were often excluded from the political process. Mississippi law at this period stated that on June 16, at 10 A,M,, at the regular voting place in all 1884 precincts, there were to be party meetings at which delegates to the eighty-two county conventions were to be selected. Negroes were unable to attend every precinct meeting, but those they did attempt to attend indicated that the meetings did not even take place in about three-fourths of the precincts.[4] In places where no one else showed Negroes elected their own delegations (in at least one case the entire procedure was televised by CBS News).[5] In other places the meetings did take place and

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[1] Ibid., pp. 159-160. [2] Ibid., p. 161. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., p. 162.
[5] At Ruleville. Ibid., pp. 162-163.

Negroes were excluded. Affidavits were sent to the Credentials Committee in Atlantic City.[1] Meanwhile support continued to build for the MFDP outside Mississippi. On July 5 the Oregon delegation to the convention voted to support the MFDP.[2]

By August the MFDP could make a good case either legally or morally that it rather than the traditional Mississippi Democratic Party should represent Mississippi.[3] There were indications, however, that the issue had already been decided against the MFDP. Len Holt states that:

> The traditional Democratic Party of Mississippi came to the Convention with certainty in its favor:
>
> 1. The group knew that 3 of its delegates would be seated as the other 65 stalked out in feigned indignation at being asked to take an oath of loyalty to the Party.
> 2. The group knew that the Freedom Democratic Party would not be allowed as part of the Mississippi delegation.
>
> This certainty came from two sources. Governor Paul B. Johnson, in a private session, had informed the delegation of the phone call received from President Lyndon B. Johnson and then had proceeded to brag about the call to the press /Jackson *Daily News*, August 13, 1964/.
>
> The other source was Douglass Wynn of Mississippi, who was one of the delegates. Wynn's seven-year-old daughter has President Lyndon B. Johnson for a godfather.[4]

Holt adds that five Southern delegations had threatened to walk out of the convention if the MFDP was seated and that the threat of Goldwater in the South added to the potency of this warning.[5] Nevertheless, Holt argues, the MFDP had some advantages. First, it had a legal case based on the illegal exclusion of registered Negro voters from the delegate-selection machinery

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 163.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] See the summary in Holt, pp. 166-167.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 165.

[5] *Ibid*., pp. 165-166.

Democratic Party in Mississippi, the illegal exlusion of Negroes from voter rolls and the refusal of the regular Democratic party to make the required promise of support to the national party ticket.[1] Second, the MFDP could rely on the nation's fresh memories of the Summer Project and on the recent (August 4) discovery of the bodies of Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner. Third, the MFDP had the pledged support of nine delegations to the convention, twenty-five Democratic Congressmen and a number of individual delegates scattered among the various delegations.[2]

The Convention Battle: MFDP Versus the President

In American politics little independence is expected of a national party convention when the party has an incumbent President who intends to run again. By and large, the President is expected to write the script. Therefore, when the MFDP found its supporters dropping rapidly away despite their earlier pledges, it can be excused for thinking that the incumbent President opposed its seating. On the evidence, he did. What follows, however, is not an objective account of the convention, but an account derived from sources sympathetic to SNCC and the MFDP: No doubt it is a one-sided account--after all, what many liberals thought was a victory for the MFDP, that party thought a humiliating defeat--but two things must be remembered. First, the MFDP was a part of the bargaining, therefore its account is, in part, first-hand. Second, and more important, there is evidence that the SNCC perception of what occurred at that convention was an important factor

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 166.   2. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

in its rapid subsequent alienation from American society and political processes. To understand SNCC, then, it is important to understand its view of the convention.

The hope of the MFDP at the convention was based on gaining a sufficient vote on the Credentials Committee--eleven votes--to present a minority report to the floor. The minority report could then be voted on by the entire convention if as many as eight delegations demanded a roll-call vote. Joseph Rauh, himself a member of the Credentials Committee, argued the MFDP's case and called on Mississippi Negroes to testify before the Committee. Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer and others presented a moving account of the savage repression of Negroes and civil rights workers in Mississippi. Mrs. Hamer's testimony was carried live to the nation by television; the testimony of others was cut off by a surprise and long press conference by the President before news cameras.[1] The response to Mrs. Hamer's testimony was enormous. "Thousands of telegrams, letters and calls poured like a torrential rain into the members of the Credentials Committee."[2]

Maneuvering now began in earnest. President Johnson apparently did not want the MFDP issue to come to the convention floor and MFDP supporters attributed this to his desire to avoid alienating the Southern white vote.[3] At any rate, Johnson proposed a compromise by which Hubert Humphrey would choose two MFDP delegates to be seated as at-large delegates.[4] The MFDP was willing to compromise, but the compromise it wanted was the one proposed

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1. Ibid., p. 169. 2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. See also SNCC, p. 253, and Mississippi, pp. 116-117.

4. Holt, pp. 169-170; SNCC, pp. 253-254.

by Congresswoman Edith Green of Oregon, a member of the Credentials Committee, by which all members of the rival Mississippi delegations pledging loyalty to the national ticket would be seated, with the votes divided between them.[1] This was a shrewd proposal because the MFDP was prepared to pledge its loyalty to the national ticket whereas most of the regular party Mississippi delegation was not. At worst it would have given equal representation to the opposed groups while forcing the regular party group to pledge a loyalty it otherwise would not; at best it would have left the MFDP as the major spokesman for the state. Once Johnson had suggested a compromise, however, the Green proposal was dead, and the MFDP found itself being urged to accept the Johnson formula by many of its former supporters including Joseph Rauh, Edith Green, Martin Luther King and Congressman William Dawson.[2] The defection of Rauh and Green was a shock to the MFDP, but the two were under great pressure, Howard Zinn reports, from Humphrey, Walter Reuther and the Democratic Party hierarchy.[3] The MFDP refused the compromise.[4]

The MFDP support did not long survive its rejection of the Johnson compromise formula. The MFDP had counted on the fact that it had the necessary eight delegations to force a roll-call vote on the convention floor. Governor Carl Sanders removed that threat by getting a ruling from the Rules Committee to the effect that only state delegations could ask for a roll-call vote--the MFDP had numbered among its supporters the delegations from Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the District of Columbia and Guam.[5] The MFDP support on the Credentials Committee evaporated just as rapidly. CORE attorney Len Holt gives fairly specific explanations for the change. After implying the motivation of Rauh and Dr. King, Holt states:

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[1] SNCC, p. 253, Holt, p. 172.

[2] Holt, p. 170.

[3] SNCC, p. 254.

[4] Holt, p. 170.

[5] Ibid., p. 171.

> Other members of the Credentials Committee who supported the Freedom Democrats were promised no judgships for their husbands; one was promised no poverty program in his Congressional district; another had his employer call him and remind him that continued support of the Freedom Democrats might be the loss of a government contract that the firm was seeking; another was told that her job with a high official of the city of New York was not helped by her support of the Freedom Democrats.
>
> The various messages from the master politicians got across. The support of the Freedom Democrats dwindled from 18 to 4 on the Credentials Committee.[1]

The majority report of the Credentials Committee was adopted, by voice vote of the convention, on Tuesday, August 25, 1964.[2] But the battle was not over.

The MFDP did not want the two at-large seats the convention had voted to give them. Mrs. Hamer spoke their feeling: "It's a token of rights on the back row that we get in Mississippi. We didn't come all this way for that mess again."[3] So the MFDP did what they had done so often before--they sat-in. Before the convention and national news media they sat in the Mississippi seats and the three traditional Democrats (the others had, as predicted, walked out rather than pledge loyalty to the national ticket) who remained refused to sit by them and were left, then, standing unhappily under the speaker's platform.[4] The next day Bayard Rustin, Wayne Morse, Jack Pratt of the National Council of Churches and Martin Luther King spoke to the MFDP delegation and urged them to accept the compromise. They again refused, this time by a vote of sixty to four.[5] Events moved rapidly. The

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[1] _Ibid_., pp. 171-172.

[2] _Ibid_., p. 172.

[3] _Ibid_., p. 174.

[4] _Ibid_.

[5] _Ibid_., pp. 175-176; _SNCC_, p. 255.

President, contrary to precedent and to his announced plans, now decided to come to the convention prior to his nomination--thereby preventing the most dramatic event of the evening from being the MFDP's stand-in at the Mississippi delegation space where all but three seats had been removed. (Three seats were left for the remaining three traditional Democrats; the others were removed to prevent another MFDP sit-in.)[1]

In the end, the MFDP found that, politically, its legal and moral case against the racist traditional Mississippi Democratic delegation was worth two seats, at-large, and the promise that at future conventions there would be a clause in the call to convention that asked for non-discriminatory participation in party affairs.[2] The MFDP refused the bargain as an insulting token, but, as it had promised, it went back to Mississippi and worked for the election of Johnson, and, as it had predicted, the traditional Democrats did not.[3] Barry Goldwater carried the state by an overwhelming margin.

The Congressional Challenge: 1965

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party lost the battle at the 1964 convention--or was unable to recognize a victory when it was offered one--but its challenge of the legitimacy of the regular Mississippi Democrats did not end. The challenge merely shifted to Congress following the 1964 elections. The United States Constitution in Article I, Section 5, states that the House of Representatives "shall be the Judge of the Elections,

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[1] Holt, pp. 174 and 176.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 173.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 178.

Returns, and Qualifications of its own Members." In accordance with the Constitution and statutory law, Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer challenged the election of Jamie L. Whitten. She argued that Jamie Whitten was not legally elected because "Negroes constituted 52.4% of the adult population of that district, yet only 2.97% had been permitted to register to vote, because of a pattern of intimidation, murder, and official restraint."[1] She documented the charge. Mrs. Hamer's challenge was one of three in Mississippi. In each case the Freedom Democratic Party candidate was denied a place on the regular ballot but polled large votes in "Freedom Elections" conducted by the MFDP.[2]

On January 4, 1965, Congressman William Fitts Ryan of New York objected to the seating of all five Mississippi Congressmen as the oaths were about to be administered. Fifty other Congressmen stood with Ryan on the issue.[3] Representative Carl Albert of Oklahoma, an Administration Spokesman, was then recognized by the Speaker, McCormick, and Representative Albert made a motion that the regular Mississippi delegation be seated until the dispute was settled.[4] Carl Albert next moved that debate be closed, a device that would prevent open debate on the Mississippi record, and on a roll-call vote on his motion requested by Congresswoman Edith Green of Oregon, Albert prevailed 276-149.[5]

This challenge, like the earlier convention challenge, failed. All five Mississippi Congressmen retained their seats. But one did not escape unscathed. Representative John Bell Williams, a member of the 1964 Mississippi delegation to the National Democratic Convention who had returned to

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[1] SNCC, p. 258.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 259.

[5] Ibid., pp. 259-260.

Mississippi to work for the election of Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee for President, was punished by his party for his disloyalty, if not for his racism, by being stripped of his party seniority--a punishment easily forgiven him in Mississippi where he was elected Governor on the Democratic ticket in November, 1967. The lesson easily drawn from the affair was that the Mississippi delegation could be as racist in its outlook and terroristic in its methods of maintaining racism as it liked--as long as it was loyal or not outspokenly disloyal to the national party. That, at least, was how it appeared to the MFDP.

SNCC Attitudes--Before and After Summer, 1964

At its birth SNCC was a loose organization of college and high school students, many of whom were committed to nonviolence as a matter of principle. Its founding statement of purpose embodied the religious dimension of their commitment and the goal they sought was integration of Negroes into the mainstream of American life as equals. Jack Newfield, a sympathetic friend of SNCC and a spokesman of the "new left," summarizes this earlier period as follows:

> SNCC began as a religious band of middle-class, rather square reformers, seeking only "our rights." The lunch counter was their entrance point to the revered American Dream of More. Their guiding spirit was not even Gandhi so much as the Bill of Rights, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, and the Holy Bible. They were black, liberal integrationists grappling with segregation.[1]

In the fall of 1961 SNCC employed its first full-time staff members.

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1. Newfield, pp. 71-72.

These workers, only a few at first, moved out into the communities and organized on a full-time basis. They went to communities in the Deep South and stayed, hoping that by their continued presence they would build trust and eliminate the suspicion that they would stir local people to protest and then abandon them to the white reaction. As they endured the inevitable suffering, their outlook gradually changed. Newfield describes the new outlook:

> By 1962 and 1963 SNCC workers had moved into the rural communities of the South. There they were shot, beaten, gassed, whipped, and jailed. They became a hardened nonviolent guerilla army, challenging not merely segregation, but "the System," with voter registration, protest marches, and community organization. They learned that Northern corporations owned the racist mills in Danville, Virginia, and the segregating factories in Birmingham. But they still believed that America, if shamed with enough redemptive suffering, would honor its century-old pledge of equality for the black man.[1]

Certainly there were tensions in SNCC as early as 1963. In November, 1963, SNCC had debated whether whites should be invited to participate in the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project of 1964. There had been some opposition, some expressions of black nationalist thinking, but the majority had remained in favor of an interracial and nonviolent assault on the Mississippi system. Moreover, appeals were made, before the summer began, and often during the summer, for federal aid in protecting constitutional rights. There was hope, at least, that the federal government would intervene actively, efficiently, effectively. But it did not. By the end of the summer SNCC had suffered a number of disillusioning and embittering blows. The federal government had not effectively intervened to protect federal rights in spite of Mississippi's summer of savage repression. Its major intervention was triggered by the murder of two whites and a Negro and SNCC thought it perceived in this only another expression of racism--Schwerner and Goodman were, after all, only two of many who had died in the cause and the only apparent explanation of the unique interest in their fate was their white skin. Certainly Mrs. Schwerner thought that was the explanation for the nation's and the federal government's interest. The pattern, as SNCC perceived it, continued when the F.B.I., which arrests bank robbers and kidnappers, was said by the Attorney General to have only investigative powers in relation to civil rights, and F.B.I. agents and justice department lawyers watched, but did not stop, numerous incidents of brutality or illegal repression. Then the MFDP lost the battle of the 1964 convention as it had lost the registration battle in the summer. And finally, the United States House of Representatives chose to seat the representatives of the racist traditional Mississippi Democratic Party rather than the MFDP. The mood of SNCC changed. Its trust in all levels of government and the liberal wing of the Democratic party was shaken and in individual cases destroyed. Jack Newfield describes the change:

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[1] Ibid., p. 72.

> The third SNCC emerged after the traumatic summer of 1964 in the image of Camus' existential rebel. The early innocent faith that the Federal Government would be the decisive force in ending segregation was shattered at the Democratic Convention and by the fact that the killers of Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner were never tried.[1] (More than three years later, in October, 1967, seven men were convicted in a Federal Court for conspiring to deprive the three of their rights, but that was the first major conviction in a civil rights case in Mississippi since Reconstruction and it was years too late to prevent the bitter reaction in SNCC. John Doar, the same man who had warned the summer volunteers that they would have to rely on local police for protection, was one of the successful prosecuting attorneys in the case.)[2]

Before the summer of 1964 SNCC was nonviolent, nonracist, and had some remaining faith in the federal government. The events of the summer it perceived in this only another expression of racism--Schwerner and Goodman were, after all, only two of many who had died in the cause and the only apparent explanation of the unique interest in their fate was their white skin. Certainly Mrs. Schwerner thought that was the explanation for the nation's and the federal government's interest. The pattern, as SNCC perceived it, continued when the F.B.I., which arrests bank robbers and kidnappers, was said by the Attorney General to have only investigative powers in relation to civil rights, and F.B.I. agents and justice department lawyers watched, but did not stop, numerous incidents of brutality or illegal repression. Then the MFDP lost the battle of the 1964 convention as it had lost the registration battle in the summer. And finally, the United States House of Representatives chose to seat the representatives of the racist traditional Mississippi Democratic Party rather than the MFDP. The mood of SNCC changed. Its trust in all levels of government and the liberal wing of the Democratic party was shaken and in individual cases destroyed. Jack Newfield describes the change:

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Before the summer of 1964 SNCC was nonviolent, nonracist, and had some remaining faith in the federal government. The events of the summer helped to produce a change in attitude, a strengthening of the already existing elements of radicalism and distrust. The attitude toward nonviolence, for example, was changing. Robert Moses, in the middle of the summer, told Robert Penn Warren how SNCC responded then to Dr. King's philosophy. "We don't agree with it, in a sense. The majority of the students are not sympathetic to the idea that they have to love the white people that they are struggling against. But there are a few who have a very religious orientation."[1] Moses added that for most SNCC members nonviolence served a tactical function: ". . . it's a question of being able to have a method of attack rather than to be always on the defensive."[2] Howard Zinn, describing the change from the original philosophy, said that: ". . . most SNCC people, in a different degree and with a great individuality of response, would probably deny that love, conscience, and morality alone could end segregation."[3] In the field of public accommodations, "it has become quite clear that the desegregation of restaurants and other public accommodations usually comes from touching the proprietor's pocketbook, not his conscience."[4] Zinn noted too that the SNCC experience in the Deep South revealed that "the usual techniques of nonviolent direct action were simply crushed by police power."[5] SNCC reacted by calling on the government in 1963 and 1964 to "intervene in the Deep South, using not love but the power of arrest and imprisonment to stop brutality and violence against civil rights workers by police and private persons."[6] The summer of 1964 gave the federal government's reply to that appeal, and it was negative.

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[1] Ibid., p. 72.

[2] Ibid.

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[1] Warren, p. 91.

[2] Ibid.

[3] SNCC, p. 221.

[4] Ibid., p. 222.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 223.

That refusal to intervene placed increasing strains on SNCC's remaining commitment to nonviolence. William McCord, a white liberal who participated in the Freedom Summer of 1964, describes an incident in which a young activist successfully reduced the tension in a group of armed Negro farmers ready to resort to violence. That same man, called "McLain," a fictitious name given him by McCord to protect him from Mississippi whites, reported to McCord shortly afterward: "I get as angry as they do. I could have killed Beckwith after they let him off for shooting Evers. And when I got word about Philadelphia--Mike Schwerner was a good friend of mine--a bunch of us almost drove there to shoot up the town. But somehow, we have to keep all this hatred under control. I don't know how long we can do it."[1] This same man, a Korean war veteran, admits the change nonviolent action has made in his life. After the war "I hung around street corners, did odd jobs and even ran a little dope. I was bitter as a man can be. I learned to kill during the war, and more than anything else, I wanted to kill a white man. If one ever came near me, I reached instinctively for my pocket knife."[2] Then McLain heard Robert Moses urging voter registration and: "He gave me hope and a chance to fight for better things. Without his influence I might still be on the streets. If you have no other channel for your anger, it will spill out in knife fights or sluggings."[3] Nonviolent participation in the movement had played a constructive role in McLain's life. But the commitment to nonviolence was only partial. As McCord summarized it:

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[1] Mississippi, p. 172.

[2] Ibid., p. 170.

[3] Ibid., p. 171.

> Young people like McLain will furnish the professional leadership for Negroes in the future. They are bitter, ready to take risks and, on the whole, willing to use nonviolent techniques _only_ as long as this strategy wins a response from white consciences. They shun publicity and look down upon the current crop of national Negro leaders. (McLain referred to Martin Luther King as "De Lawd" because of King's alleged tendency to seek the limelight.) Their determination has a grim and rather frightening quality about it.[1]

The commitment to nonviolence had become tactical and the failure of nonviolent action to convert white hearts in Mississippi or bring immediate effective intervention from outside the state made that commitment increasingly weaker.

The attitude toward interracial action was changing too. Even before the summer of 1964 there had been some hostility to white participation in the project. That hostility grew during the summer. Robert Moses reported during the summer that: ". . . it's very hard for some of the students who have been brought up in Mississippi and are the victims of this kind of race hatred not to begin to let all of that out on the white staff. . . ."[2] Mentioning a recent outburst of "about fifteen minutes" of "really racial statement of hatred" by one staff member, Moses explained the usual criticisms of the whites in the project:

> Well, first, the white people come down and have better skills and have better training. The tendency always is for them to gravitate to command posts. But Negro students, you know, actually feel this is their own movement. This is the strongest feeling among the Negro students--that this is the one thing that belongs to them in the whole country; and I think this causes the emotional reaction toward the white people coming in and participating.[3]

White liberalism in its various manifestations was proving to be an uncomfortable and unreliable ally. White volunteers for the summer project caused tension by coming in and taking over leadership positions. On the national level, white liberals such as Joseph Rauh and certain members of the Credentials Committee of the Democratic National Convention embittered SNCC members by, in the SNCC view, abandoning the MFDP under pressure or by finding acceptable a compromise in which the MFDP was told how many delegates they could have (two), whom they could select (Aaron Henry and Ed King), and what they would represent (not the state of Mississippi but that mythical area, "at large"). Stokely Carmichael's reaction to this was: "If it was a compromise then the MFDP would have had a chance to save something. They were not consulted. The Democratic Party said, 'Here, take this, it's all we will give you.'"[1] And Carmichael's initial reaction is reported to have been: "This proves that the liberal Democrats are just as racist as Goldwater!"[2] It may be doubted that either Goldwater or the national liberal Democrats were consciously racist, but a Carmichael could have pointed out that the white liberal national Democratic party was unable to get the national government to intervene effectively in Mississippi, or to cast out a racist Mississippi delegation to the Democratic convention, or to exclude a racist Mississippi delegation from the liberal 1965 House of Representatives. Even the national government's interventions were tinged with racism in the eyes of SNCC. The national government did intervene, too slowly and ineffectively it is true, in the murder of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman, but this too proved a point to SNCC: "Plenty of Negroes had suffered violence. So you do not get intervention by violence as such. You get it by violence to white skin."[3] The widow of Michael Schwerner agreed: "We all know that this search with hundreds of sailors is because Andrew

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 173.

[2] Warren, p. 96.

[3] _Ibid_.

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[1] Ibid., p. 118.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 124.

Goodman and my husband are white. If only Chaney was involved, nothing would've been done."[1] Martin Luther King, in discussing the rise of the "black power" movement, mentions the same phenomenon in relation to an incident in the Selma campaign in 1965:

> . . . even when blacks and whites die together in the cause of justice, the death of the white person gets more attention and concern than the death of the black person. Stokely and his colleagues from SNCC were with us in Alabama when Jimmy Lee Jackson, a brave young Negro man, was killed and when James Reeb, a committed Unitarian white minister, was fatally clubbed to the ground. They remembered how President Johnson sent flowers to the gallant Mrs. Reeb, and in his eloquent "We Shall Overcome" speech paused to mention that one person, James Reeb, had already died in the struggle. Somehow the President forgot to mention Jimmy, who died first. The parents and sister of Jimmy received no flowers from the President. The students felt this keenly. Not that they felt that the death of James Reeb was less than tragic, but because they felt that the failure to mention Jimmy Jackson only reinforced the impression that to white America the life of a Negro is insignificant and meaningless.[2]

The discomfort of white association and leadership in the movement and the betrayals (as perceived by SNCC) by white liberals in the summer and its aftermath led to a change in SNCC attitudes toward whites. Robert Penn Warren reported after the 1964 summer project that:

> . . . there is now the inclination on the part of at least some members of the high command in Mississippi to pull back from the white association, to distrust white attitudes and motives, to assume, as /James/ Farmer interprets the feeling of many of the younger people, that "there are no real friends /among whites/ who will stand up when the chips are down," to "go it alone" at whatever cost.[3]

Yet the rejection of white liberal support was in many cases a class rather than a race phenomenon. Some of the leaders in SNCC were turning to a faith in the economic poor of both races rather than to black nationalism.

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1. See Rita Schwerner's statement. Holt, pp. 29-30.

2. Where Do We Go from Here, p. 34.

3. Warren, p. 122.

Instead of racism (no whites can be trusted), these leaders hoped to build an alliance of the poor of both races against the exploiting middle and upper classes. In September, 1964, the interracial group that had attempted to organize poor whites in Mississippi issued a leaflet expressing this philosophy. Its thesis was: "We must be allies . . . race has led us both to poverty," and it argued that:

> The important work to be done is with poor folks and not with moderates and liberals. The white poor have the political need of decent jobs, housing, education, and health. The movement must go to them and help them develop their own leadership rather than demand that the moderates and the liberals fight their political battles for them. The greatest thing about the freedom movement in Mississippi (and what the rest of the country should consider very seriously) is that the people themselves are voicing their own political needs.[1]

The leaflet went on to argue against a racist solution on black nationalist or other lines:

> Politically, the freedom movement cannot succeed as a Negro movement for two reasons: First, a solid black vote can never be a political majority of the state or the South. Neither can a solid voting block of the white poor. Only 42.3% of Mississippi and roughly 20% of the South is Negro. In only 27 of 82 counties in Mississippi are Negroes a majority, and in eleven of those, they are bare majorities. . . . Separate black societies is an impossible solution in as interdependent a society as ours.
>
> Secondly, a racial political order can never be a stable one. Not only would that order create a chaotic standstill in legislative chambers, it would also create nothing less than a racial war among the people. For the freedom movement to follow the insane path toward that order would create a revengeful Samson who destroys himself in order to destroy the nation which oppressed his people.[2]

Having made the call for an interracial movement concentrating on the poor of both races, the leaflet suggested that help might come from SNCC and CORE field workers, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Highlander Folk School, and white college students.[3] This faction in SNCC remained interracial in its orientation but became radical in its economic and political philosophy. It stressed the importance of the poor and laid emphasis upon development of local leadership among the poor and a democracy in which the poor make the basic decisions affecting their lives. Jack Newfield described the post-1964 summer project of SNCC in these terms: "It believed in an alliance of the black and white underclass. It had a mystical and transcendental faith in the inherent goodness of the poor, and even in their infinite wisdom. . . . The keynote words and phrases of this SNCC were freedom, community, decentralization, local leadership, participatory democracy."[1]

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[1] Holt, pp. 138-139.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 139-140.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 140.

The summer of 1964 and its aftermath--the convention struggle and the Congressional challenge--had proved a bitter experience for SNCC. What remained of its faith in nonviolence was a largely tactical commitment of the moment; what remained of its faith in the American Dream and American political processes was largely the hope that an organized underclass of poor Negroes and whites could use those institutions to radically alter the system. The disappointments of 1964 and 1965 gave strong support to the rising tide of radicalism and black nationalism in SNCC.

Selma, 1965

Selma, Alabama, became the crisis point of the civil rights movement in February and March, 1965. SNCC had been active in Selma since February, 1963, working with local leaders such as Mrs. Amelia Boynton and the Rev. James Bevel of SCLC.[1] Despite the combined efforts of local people, SNCC and SCLC, whites, led by the local sheriff, Jim Clark, had successfully prevented any significant increase in Negro registration. Then, in early 1965, SNCC workers drifted into Selma and the surrounding area from Mississippi and other points. In February, Dr. King, who had just won the Nobel Peace Prize, came to Selma, bringing with him national and international attention.[2]

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[1] Newfield, p. 72.

On February 8 James Bevel of SCLC and Ivanhoe Donaldson of SNCC were beaten when they led a group of Negroes to the county courthouse to petition to register without interference. Fifty-seven were arrested and Bevel, in bad condition, was hospitalized. He was chained to his bed. On February 10 Sheriff Clark intercepted 175 Negro students on their way to the courthouse and herded them with clubs and electric prods out into the country on a long forced march. Some were beaten when they could continue no longer. On February 16 Sheriff Clark clubbed a Negro man and woman. On February 18, in nearby Marion, Negroes leaving a church to protest an arrest were halted and ordered to disperse. When they began praying and refused to move, state troopers moved in and dispersed them by clubbing them. On February 26 Jimmy Lee Jackson, a Negro who had been beaten and shot in the stomach by a state trooper the night of the Marion demonstration, died in a Selma hospital. On March 7 a group of Negroes led by John Lewis of SNCC began a march from Selma to Montgomery to protest discrimination in Alabama. State troopers supplemented by a group of white deputies halted them on a bridge just outside Selma and instructed them to disperse. When the marchers knelt to pray instead of immediately dispersing they were beaten and gassed. The leader, John Lewis, suffered a fractured skull; others were injured. On March 9 the Rev. James Reeb of Boston, in Selma in response to an appeal for aid from outside the state, was beaten by local whites. He died two days later.

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[1] Howard Zinn has provided a fairly detailed account of SNCC activity in Selma. See SNCC, pp. 147-166 and 263-267.

[2] Ibid., p. 263.

[3] Ibid., pp. 263-265. The following account is taken from these pages unless otherwise noted.

Through an entire month of demonstrations for basic citizenship rights the Federal Government had refused the pleas of civil rights groups to intervene and halt the brutal police repression.[1] F.B.I. and Justice Department lawyers did watch and take notes, but no other action was forthcoming.[2] On March 7, in response to the clubbing at the bridge, the White House issued a statement that President Johnson ". . . was keeping fully informed about the latest developments at Selma."[3] Then the Rev. James Reeb, a Northern clergyman, died.

Within twenty-four hours after the news of Reeb's death:

> . . . thousands of people marched in New York and New Jersey to sites of federal buildings, asking that Johnson move. Two hundred students sat-in on the eleventh floor of the Federal Building in Boston, 2,000 marched in Los Angeles, and meetings and rallies took place in many other cities. Reaction in Europe, Africa, and Asia was also strong.[4]

And President Johnson responded:

> He delivered a remarkably eloquent and vigorous speech to a joint session of Congress on behalf of Negro rights, and asked for a strong voting bill to eliminate the subterfuges and schemes used by states to deprive Negroes of the right to register and vote. In addition, following up a federal court order in Montgomery permitting the proposed civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Johnson ordered several thousand National Guardsmen and U.S. Army troops to protect the marchers.[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 265.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 266.

[5] Ibid., p. 267.

The march from Selma to Montgomery was completed under massive federal protection. Howard Zinn assesses the results as follows:

> Still, when the march was over, and the troops were gone, the basic demand of the civil rights movement remained unanswered: day-to-day protection by a special corps of federal agents, who would use a combination of persuasion and the power of arrest to protect constitutional rights and prevent violence. /Almost as a symbolic expression of this need, the day after the dispersal of the troops a white woman driving Negroes back to Selma was shot and killed./ What the events in Selma showed was the power of demonstrative protest in forcing the national government to take decisive action. What it also showed was the traditional reluctance of politicians to move *unless* pressured by a set of disastrous events and an accompanying wave of indignation.[1]

The Selma campaign in 1965 closely followed the pattern used again and again by Dr. King. A campaign was developed in a locale notorious for its brutal suppression of any civil rights activity. In a month of mass demonstrations tension was built up and a crisis was created. Local and state police reacted, predictably in view of their past behavior, with startling and unnecessary brutality. The contrast created, plain for the nation and the world to see, was between a group petitioning nonviolently for the right to vote--a right already legally theirs--and a group brutally and violently suppressing the petitioners. Morality and legality were on one side; unreasonableness, force and illegality were on the other. In addition, the appeal had been made, successfully, for support by the symbols of religion and morality, the clergy. The brutal murder of one and beating of another for responding to that call added to the outrage of the nation. Faced with such a clear confrontation of right and wrong, reasonableness and unreasonableness, legality and illegality, the nation and the politicians responded. The 1965 voting rights act was the result. Selma, then, was a monument to nonviolence and a great success for civil rights--or so it appeared to white liberals. The view from the Negro ranks was different.

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[1] *Ibid*.

In the first place, the passage of the voting rights act was accomplished half a year after the brutality of the Selma campaign. What Negroes saw immediately was white brutality carried on without Federal interference for a month. Even when the National Government did intervene, its intervention was belated and temporary, as the murder of Viola Luizzo immediately after the march to Montgomery demonstrated. Day-to-day Federal protection for those attempting to assert their Constitutional rights was still lacking. It is instructive in assessing the impact of Selma on Negroes to note the statements of Negro leaders. Roy Wilkins, moderate leader of the NAACP, said that Negroes were "furious over the brutal attack by Alabama State Police on Sunday's /March 7/ freedom march at Selma."[1] And he added: "Like the citizens of Nazi-occupied France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Norway, Negroes must either submit to the heels of their oppressors or they must organize, underground if necessary, to protect themselves from the oppression of Gov. /George/ Wallace and his storm troopers."[2] Lerone Bennett, Senior Editor of Ebony, argued that:

> Not only Roy Wilkins, but millions of Negro Americans began to move to new positions in the wake of Selma. During and after the Selma demonstrations, there was a bitter behind-the-scenes struggle between Martin Luther King, Jr., and SNCC activists who believed King was too closely allied with the federal government and the labor and white church establishment. There was, at the same time, an intensification of the ideological struggle in the North where many intellectuals and activists adopted Malcolm X as a patron saint and called for a new policy of self-defense.[3]

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1. Bennett, p. 252. 2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., pp. 252-253.

SNCC was divided. John Lewis, its Chairman, was committed to nonviolence on religious and philosophical grounds, and Lewis led the march across the bridge, suffering a fractured skull when hit again where he had been clubbed while on the Freedom Rides in 1961. Paul Good reported that "many Negroes in SNCC thought that John Lewis was a Christ-loving damn fool to have crossed that bridge."[1] James Forman, one of the major SNCC leaders, spoke for many in SNCC when he told a gethering in Brown's Chapel in Selma: ". . . if we can't eat at the table, we'll knock the [obscenity] legs off."[2] SNCC, then, was increasingly impatient with nonviolence. Even John Lewis was affected. "I felt after Selma that it was my last demonstration. We're only flesh. I could understand people not wanting to be beaten anymore. The body gets tired. You put out so much energy and you saw such little gain. Black capacity to believe white would really open his heart, open his life to nonviolent appeal was running out."[3] Paul Good, describing Lewis's career in SNCC, reported that:

> A massive deterioration of white credibility in Negro eyes was taking place and Lewis could no more prevent it than nascent black nationalism could take credit for it. White conscience seemed to need black sacrifice to stimulate it, and often lapsed when black militancy insisted on human prerogatives beyond the letter of the law. White conscience, many Negroes were concluding, was a sometime thing.[4]

Selma was a victory for civil rights and nonviolence, but it was a costly victory, and it posed the question whether nonviolence could be sustained.

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1. Paul Good, "Odyssey of a Man--And a Movement," *New York Times Magazine* (June 25, 1967), p. 46.

2. Richard Armstrong, "Will Snick Overcome?," *Saturday Evening Post*, CCXXXVIII (August 28, 1965), 81.

3. Good, p. 46.

4. *Ibid*.

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[1] Paul Good, "Odyssey of a Man--And a Movement," *New York Times Magazine* (June 25, 1967), p. 46.

[2] Richard Armstrong, "Will Snick Overcome?," *Saturday Evening Post*, CCXXXVIII (August 28, 1965), 81.

[3] Good, p. 46.

[4] *Ibid*.

Organizational Changes: Spring, 1965

In the spring of 1965 SNCC held a number of staff meetings that altered its organizational structure and policy orientation. SNCC's organizational structure had been based on its original nature--that of a co-ordinator of students. By spring, 1965, SNCC's student support had dwindled and it had become, in the main, a group of professional, full-time organizers. "It was now determined that this staff of over two hundred would become the basic decision-making body in SNCC, that it would meet about four times a year to lay down basic policy, and the Executive Committee would be drawn from these staff people working in the Black Belt."[1] There was debate about the amount of power to be given to the Executive Committee. Some SNCC people, "anxious to avoid the 'iron law of oligarchy' they had seen operating in other organizations . . . argued against an emphasis on the Executive Committee as a group of 'leaders', and urged that the whole staff participate continually in decision-making."[2] Despite this sentiment, "the Executive Committee was given strong powers between staff meetings, and a three person Secretariat of top officials was set up: James Forman was Executive Secretary, John Lewis as Chairman, Cleveland Sellers as Program Chairman."[3] Many of the positions on the new Executive Committee went to Mississippi Negroes in order to keep power close to the community.[4]

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[1] SNCC, p. 268.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

A New Radicalism

By 1965 SNCC was becoming a thoroughly radical force in American life with attitudes hostile to the major institutions and values of the society. One of the tenets of its developing faith was that the poor, the oppressed, white or black, had a special value and even possessed a special wisdom, and that these oppressed poor when consulted and organized could lead America to a new and just society. This view entailed less reliance upon and even a scorn for the older middle-class liberalism. Thus in the spring of 1965 in Atlanta SNCC decided that: ". . . instead of issuing a call for thousands of northern volunteers for the summer of 1965, a series of 'People's Conferences' would be held in Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, and Georgia. At these conferences, local people would decide on programs and personnel for their areas."[1] As SNCC's chairman, John Lewis, explained it: "We want the people to tell us what we can do. We'll do any thing they tell us."[2] Jack Newfield has elaborated on the SNCC of 1965:

> Strongly anarchic in spirit (but not in program), SNCC instills in its workers skepticism of all bureaucracy and all centralized authority--including its own. And SNCC preaches and practices participatory democracy--the concept that everyone should take part in all the decisions that affect his life. With that goes an almost mystical faith in the ability of "the little people"--the lumpen proletariat--to change their condition and govern themselves democratically; a vision which seems to be the antithesis of Communist elitism and authoritarianism.[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Andrew Kopkind, "New Radicals in Dixie," New Republic, CLII (April 10, 1965), 39.

[3] Jack Newfield, "The Question of SNCC," The Nation, CCI (July 19, 1965), 39.

Along with the faith in the poor went a distrust of the existing political institutions. Richard Armstrong explained "participatory democracy" in these terms.

> Unhappy with both major parties, S.N.C.C. opts for something called "direct" or "participatory" democracy at the community level. As S.N.C.C. sees it, the southern Negro has never had a voice in his own destiny, and the first need is for him to learn to speak out and begin making some of the decisions that affect his own life.[1]

As Lawrence Guyot of SNCC put it: "We are going to see if President Johnson and all the flaming liberals in this country really mean it when they say everybody ought to participate. We're ready."[2] SNCC, then, placed its faith in the poor. Despite its professed belief in the guidance of the poor, though, some observers thought its leadership came from a few organizers. "But, though S.N.C.C. exalts the 'old farmer' and is doggedly anti-leader, the force that holds this sprawling organization together comes from a dozen or so talented leaders."[3]

SNCC's radical faith in the poor was matched by its alienation from the established powers and institutions of the nation. Richard Armstrong noted in August, 1965, that SNCC's view of the United States "is harsh, coinciding on some points with the orthodox Communist line."[4] Thus Lawrence Guyot argued that: ". . . a few people in this country control the entire political arena, Democratic and Republican. The political arena has got to be amended to let more and more people in."[5] Armstrong also comments that "SNCC's economic ideas are hazy but tend toward a planned economy."[6] Guyot, for example, said in Hattiesburg that: "If this movement spreads, you wouldn't need to worry about jobs or food."[7] Silas Norman, project director in Alabama, added: ". . . if there were any real democracy in this country, we wouldn't store grain while people go hungry."[1] And Stokely Carmichael was more specific:

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[1] Armstrong, p. 81.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_.

[4] _Ibid_.

[5] _Ibid_.

[6] _Ibid_.

[7] _Ibid_.

> Yes, I would like to see the government take over U.S. Steel, General Motors, all the big corporations. I'd like to see more than one hundred people control over 60 per cent of the industry. I'd like to see all these plantations divided up until everybody who was on the plantation had his plot of land, because like Mrs. Hamer said: "Who the hell's land is it anyway."[2]

Howard Zinn warned against the notion that SNCC was a doctrinaire socialist group, however. These statements, he argued, "suggest a kind of socialism, but to put it this way freezes what is really a fluid attitude, directed at ending deprivation and equalizing wealth, but completely open about ways to do this."[3] The new Executive Secretary of SNCC, James Forman, explained SNCC's attitude:

> We go beyond civil rights in a lot of things. We raise threats to the whole value system of our society, to the whole system of young people devoting their lives to money. Most people in S.N.C.C. feel that there has to be a reshaping of American institutions. The kind of votes and deals that go on in Congress have to be changed. The poor have to get a better break. If that's socialism, all right, but most people in S.N.C.C. would shun the word, because there's socialism and socialism. We don't have a rigid program. We are pragmatic, chipping away.[4]

Forman added: "I consider myself basically an agitator seeking a nonviolent revolution in this country."[5]

SNCC's distrust of American domestic institutions and values extended to American foreign policy as well. That foreign policy was viewed as an extension of the racism that marred American domestic policy. Thus SNCC leaders Robert Parris, Courtland Cox and Stokely Carmichael joined with Yale historian Staughton Lynd and pacifists Dave Dellinger and Eric Weinberger in opening an office in Washington to organize "students, poor people and intellectuals" against the war in Vietnam.[1] Courtland Cox explained that: "We have to convince the country that civil rights workers get killed in the South because the government has a certain attitude toward killing in Vietnam. The concept that it is all right to kill an 'enemy' affects the morality of the country so that people can be murdered here."[2] Robert Parris stated that:

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[1] Ibid.

[2] SNCC, p. 274.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Armstrong, p. 81.

[5] Ibid.

> Most liberals think of Mississippi as a cancer, as a distortion of America. But we think Mississippi is an accurate reflection of America's values and morality. Why else can't the people who killed Andrew, James and Mickey be brought to justice, unless a majority of the community condones murder. Sheriff Rainey is not a freak; he reflects the majority. And what he did is related to the napalm bombings of "objects" in Vietnam.[3]

By 1965, then, SNCC leaders had begun the merger of SNCC civil rights activity with the Vietnam peace movement. In January, 1966, SNCC became the first major civil rights organization to condemn the Vietnam war. In Atlanta John Lewis issued the statement that: "Vietnamese are murdered because the U.S. is pursuing an aggressive policy in violation of international law." Lewis went on to urge civil rights workers to avoid the draft by all legal means.[4] The qualification that legal means were to be used was soon to disappear.

By 1965 SNCC had become thoroughly skeptical of American institutions and values. It distrusted all levels of American government and both major political parties; it rejected the materialistic values and acceptance of gross inequalities characteristic of American capitalism; it viewed American foreign policy as an expression of the racial bigotry SNCC and Negroes encountered so often at home. This basic distrust of American values and political institutions posed the question of how to proceed. Despite its frustrations, SNCC remained committed to nonviolence, but that commitment was insufficient as a program, insufficient as a guide to action. In part, SNCC relied on the forthcoming "People's Conferences" to provide a guide. But in fact the poor proved to have little guidance to offer. The poor provided no program. Still, SNCC explored new tactics in 1965. One such tactic was the gradual, though at first unofficial, expansion of SNCC's concern to include the peace movement and an alliance with the pacifists and radicals involved in that movement. A second change was SNCC's attempt to organize a few of the larger cities in the South; previously it had restricted its organizing largely to the small rural communities. Finally, SNCC explored political mobilization both inside and outside the Democratic party: Julian Bond ran for the state legislature in Georgia from a district in Atlanta and Stokely Carmichael was instrumental in creating an all-black political party in Alabama. There were, in addition, exploratory efforts at unionization of plantation hands in Mississippi.

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[1] "The Question of SNCC," p. 40.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] "SNCC's 'Dissent,'" Newsweek, LXVII (January 17, 1966), 26.

The move into the cities--Montgomery, Atlanta, and Birmingham--was an attempt to organize the black urban communities as SNCC had already organized the black rural communities over much of the South. The attempt met immediate difficulties. Fred Meely, SNCC veteran of the Mississippi campaigns, explained the problem in the summer of 1965.

> The cities are a whole new experience for us. Size is something new to us. So is the problem of dealing with an existing Negro leadership that is conservative and corrupt like the ministers and lawyers here in Montgomery. This middle class doesn't exist in places like

> Greenwood or Holly Springs. Another reason the cities are so hard to crack is that Negroes here are much less open to the idea of nonviolence. And they are more apathetic. They have a whole different set of values from rural farmers. There is a hard core of hate and violence in every black man in this city. Dozens of Negroes get cut up in fights every Saturday night. Even those people who came into the office looking for help are filled with hostility and looking for a fight.[1]

Jack Newfield, describing SNCC's urban organizing efforts, said: "In exploring the cities, SNCC's strategy has been to give priority to organizing 'those people most damaged by the society'--junkies, winoes, prostitutes, dropouts, petty criminals and the mentally disturbed; a tactic that is based more on Genet's existential conception of the underclass than on the economic one of Marx."[2] Though sympathetic to SNCC's urban organizing efforts, Newfield was eventually forced to conclude that those efforts had failed.[3]

The move into regular Democratic Party politics took place in Atlanta, Georgia, where Julian Bond ran for the state legislature on the Democratic ticket. Newfield reports that the Bond candidacy led to fierce debate within the SNCC staff. Some SNCC workers opposed all electoral action; others favored a third party movement.[4] Charles Cobb, a SNCC field secretary who acted as Bond's campaign manager, explained the candidacy in this way:

> We don't know what it means to function as a Democrat in the Georgia House. But we think it is vital that we explore this area to see if you really have to get co-opted and sell out, or whether it is possible to use that position to organize people and release energy.
>
> I think that with the passage of the voting rights bill and future reapportionment decisions, the rest of the South will begin to resemble Atlanta. And we have to be ready to exploit that environment the best we can. Julian's campaign was an experiment, that's all.[5]

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1. "The Question of SNCC," pp. 39-40.

2. Ibid.

3. A Prophetic Minority, p. 75.

4. "The Question of SNCC," p. 40.

5. Ibid.

Julian Bond's candidacy was an experiment, fiercely debated within the SNCC organization, and its results would help to shape the SNCC view of the traditional political parties. Julian Bond was elected, twice, from Atlanta's 136th district, and he was denied his seat, twice, because the Georgia House thought his statements on the Vietnamese war and those who objected to serving in it were subversive and disloyal.[1] Eventually he was seated on the basis of a legal case taken to the United States Supreme Court. The experience was not one to confirm SNCC's little remaining faith in the electoral process and the Democratic Party.

Further disappointments awaited SNCC in Mississippi. The Mississippi Delta, scene of earlier SNCC heroics, witnessed in the summer of 1965 the formation of the Freedom Labor Union, a co-operative effort by SNCC and the Delta Ministry of the National Council of Churches to organize the Negro hoe hands and tractor drivers who had, in the former category, worked for three dollars for a ten hour day. Some one thousand cotton field workers went on strike for $1.25 an hour for chopping cotton.[2] The strike proved ineffective, however, because the demand for greatly increased pay by workers who were already at least as expensive as the machines that could replace them only led to further mechanization and the displacement of even more workers in an area where there was substantial unemployment and underemployment already. By 1966, "over seventy-five per cent of all cotton was picked by machines in the seventeen major cotton-growing counties of Mississippi. (A machine can pick one bale of cotton per hour; it takes an able-bodied man one week to pick a bale.)"[1] Unionization in such a situation did not prove effective.

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[1] A Prophetic Minority, p. 74.

[2] Armstrong, p. 80, and John K. Jessup, "An Urgent New Reach to be Equal," Life, LX (June 3, 1966), p. 94.

Stokely Carmichael and the Black Panther Party

Perhaps the most dramatic new direction taken by SNCC in 1965 was the formation of an all-black political party in Lowndes and surrounding counties in Alabama. This party, commonly known by its symbol, the black panther, was created in the heart of one of the most racist counties in a racist state. The architect of this new party, Stokely Carmichael, was already a leading figure in SNCC, but he was soon to become its dominant figure and impress upon it the separatist policy embodied in the Black Panther Party.

Stokely Carmichael arrived in Lowndes County in January, 1965, and at that time "not one of the 12,000 Negroes were registered, and white registration was 117 per cent."[2] He later explained his choice of Lowndes, one of the most feared counties for civil rights activity: "I just got into that Bob Moses (Parris) bag. I had to see what I could do in the place no one else would go."[3] The greatest problem facing Carmichael was the fear instilled in local Negroes by whites. Jack Newfield visited Lowndes early in 1965 and he has described the means by which Carmichael attempted to overcome this fear: "He had been there three months and there already had been one murder. Fear paralyzed the energy of the black community, which outnumbered whites 4 to 1. Stokely broke that fear by taunting the sheriff, walking behind him in broad daylight, mocking his stride, mimicking his dress, and cursing him in Yiddish: "Kish mir tuchas, baby."[1] Carmichael's technique was effective, but it was not one calculated to give him a long life. Apparently he did not expect one. When Newfield next met Carmichael it was in New York following the funeral of the Rev. Jonathan Daniels. Carmichael said: "Look, man, I've been to seventeen funerals since 1961. I know I'm going to die, but that just makes me work all the harder and faster, dig?"[2] The fatalism was reasonable. Between February and August, 1965, four civil rights workers were killed in Lowndes or nearby counties.[3]

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[1] Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 151-152.

[2] A Prophetic Minority, p. 79.

[3] Ibid.

When Carmichael arrived in Lowndes in January, 1965, no Negroes were registered to vote; with SNCC's organizing and passage of the 1965 voting rights act (a Federal Registrar was appointed in Lowndes), over two thousand Negroes were registered by December, a total matching that of the white registered in the county.[4] In November, 1965, once the appointment of a Federal Registrar made mass Negro registration possible, SNCC decided to form a separate political party in Lowndes and six nearby counties. Carmichael explained the policy to liberals and radicals in Washington, D.C.:

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[1] Ibid., p. 78.

[2] Ibid.

[3] The four were: Jimmy Lee Jackson, shot by a state trooper; the Reverend James Reeb of Boston, clubbed by white citizens; Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, shot in Lowndes while driving marchers home from Montgomery; and the Reverend Jonathan Daniels, shot by a white storekeeper in Hayneville, the Lowndes county seat. The Daniels killing was witnessed by three SNCC workers, but that was insufficient evidence to convict the storekeeper, Tom Coleman. See A Prophetic Minority, p. 80.

[4] Ibid.

> The county courthouse has always been the symbol of oppression for the rural Negro. But we are going to make it the symbol of liberation. . . . We're going to emancipate the Black Belt courthouse by courthouse, starting with Lowndes. We're gonna build political parties run by poor people that will run candidates for everything that runs. We're going to elect sheriffs, school boards, tax assessors, everything in Lowndes County with our party. We're gonna call it the Black Panther.[1]

Stokely Carmichael went back to Lowndes and worked for an all-black ticket, but local Negroes wanted an integrated slate. Carmichael got his wish, however, because no local white would run on the Black Panther ticket.[2] Carmichael explained his choice of an all-black party in simple terms. "We pull no punches--we don't trust white folks."[3] And he added: "What kind of compromises can we make with these guys that been beating us over the head all these years? We're not going to work from within the Democratic Party--we're going to wreak havoc from without."[4] Throughout the winter and into the spring SNCC worked in Lowndes and surrounding counties registering Negroes and getting ready to challenge the all-white Alabama Democratic Party at the polls.

Black Separatism, and Carmichael, Take Over: The Nashville Meeting, April, 1966

Early in 1966 SNCC met in Nashville, Tennessee, to debate its future. In many ways that future looked bleak. Its nonviolent efforts in the South had suffered savage repression by local authorities and mobs, while its appeals to the National Democratic Party had, in its view, been rebuffed in

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1. Ibid. 2. Ibid.

3. "Panther on the Prowl," Newsweek, LXVII (February 7, 1966), 20.

4. Ibid.

the 1964 Democratic National Convention, and its challenge of the racist Mississippi Congressional Delegation had been defeated by the House of Representatives.[1] Jack Newfield asserts that the Convention battle of 1964 was SNCC's "final request for entrance to the American Dream."[2] He then evokes the events of the period in order to explain the despair that settled upon SNCC.

> Then Malcolm X, the shining black prince of ghetto youth was assassinated. The war in Vietnam continued to escalate and Santo Domingo was invaded by 20,000 marines because a popular revolution had 53 Communists in its ranks. The anti-poverty Headstart program in Mississippi was emasculated by Sargent Shriver, under pressure from Senators Stennis and Eastland. SNCC communications direction Julian Bond was twice elected to the Georgia state legislature from Atlanta's 136th district--and twice he was denied his seat because he opposed the war in Vietnam. Mississippi Negroes, homeless and hungry, set up a tent city across the street from the White House to dramatize their plight, but President Johnson refused even to see them. Terror by whites against blacks continued in the deep South; in the "model city" of Tuskeegee, Samual Younge, a college student active with SNCC, was killed. The Mississippi legislature gerrymandered out of existence the 2nd delta district, because it had a Negro population majority. . . .[3]

Other factors contributed to the change that occurred at the Nashville meeting. Newfield argues that:

> One was the general decline of the civil-rights movement as a national force after the Selma demonstrations of February and March of 1965. Since then, the passage of the Voting Rights Bill lulled liberals into the illusion that The Problem had been solved, and the riots in Watts turned moderate feeling in the country sharply against civil rights. Further, the war in Vietnam and ghetto poverty began to absorb the energies of student activists. And almost all the civil-rights strategies for change in the South seemed implausible. The civil-rights movement had reached an impasse, with aimless frustrations building up fury behind the barrier of insoluble problems.[4]

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1. The MFDP challenge was defeated by a vote of 228 to 143 in September, 1965. Carmichael and Hamilton, pp. 94-95.

2. _A Prophetic Minority_, p. 74.

3. _Ibid_.

4. _Ibid_., pp. 74-75.

And there were problems within the organization:

> Meanwhile, SNCC itself began to deteriorate internally. The number of organizers in the field fell from 200 in late 1964 to 120 in the winter of 1966. The prophetic band that had provided the rest of the freedom movement with so many new ideas, grew stale, repeating old formulas. Programs like all-out support of the MFDP congressional challenge and attempts at urban organizing in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Atlanta proved to be failures. Factionalism increased inside SNCC, and large numbers gathered around Bob Parris and began to drift off into other directions, some to organize on their own, others to form a bohemian subculture in New York's East Village. Drinking, auto accidents, petty thievery, pot smoking, personality clashes, inefficiency, and anti-white outbursts all increased inside SNCC during this period. The mood of SNCC on the eve of the Nashville staff retreat was sullen and desperate for life.[1]

The May, 1966, meeting in Nashville, lasting an entire week, brought a fundamental reorientation of SNCC policy. The debate was heated and Jack Newfield reports that there were ". . . open expressions of anti-white feeling at the meeting. White staffers were sometimes taunted and mocked when they tried to speak."[2] One staff member proposed that only the black or African press be allowed to cover SNCC press conferences.[3] Another field secretary went far beyond that. In his anger he "seriously suggested SNCC arrange for 100 Negroes to study nuclear physics at UCLA and then be sent to an African country to help it construct an atomic bomb to 'blow up America.'"[4] Newfield argues, however, that hatred of whites was not the dominant theme of the meeting. He states that:

> But the dominant figures in the emerging SNCC--Carmichael, Courtland Cox, Charley Bobb and Ivanhoe Donaldson--spoke _not in racist terms_--_but in nationalist terms_, insisting on the necessity of _independent black political, economic, and cultural institutions_. They said whites could no longer organize blacks. They said, "Being pro-black was not being

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 75.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_.

[4] _Ibid_.

anti-white." Carmichael at one point exclaimed, "Man, I'm not in that racist bag--I just dig black."[1]

John Lewis, committed to nonviolence on religious grounds, was chairman of SNCC. Stokely Carmichael, a hero to many in SNCC on the basis of his Mississippi and Alabama organizing and his formation of the Black Panther Party in Lowndes, contested Lewis for the post. Lewis initially withstood the challenge by a vote of sixty to twenty-two.[2] Following the vote, the SNCC staff began an exploration of the basic operating assumptions of their organization. As the debate and discussion progressed: "Gradually the realization grew that they no longer believed integration into the American Dream was possible or desirable, and that any contact with white mainstream institutions was damaging to black psyches. It was at this point that the election of Lewis, a popular but not authoritative symbol of SNCC's religious and moral past, was reopened."[3] John Lewis provided an issue for his opponent by telling the SNCC staff that he wanted to attend the White House Conference on Civil Rights. The staff was in no mood to deal with the President and voted to boycott the meeting. Lewis then stated that he had been a member of the planning sessions and he intended to attend the conference in defiance of the boycott vote. On the second vote for the chairmanship, Stokely Carmichael won by a margin of sixty to twelve.[4] Black separatism had prevailed.

The mood of the new SNCC was revealed by the public statement it issued rejecting any participation in the White House Conference on Civil Rights.

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1. Ibid., pp. 75-76.
2. Ibid., p. 76.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

> The Student (sic) Nonviolent Coordinating Committee believes the White House Conference entitled To Secure These Rights is absolutely unnecessary and rejects its invitation to participate in this useless endeavor for the following reasons:
>
> 1. The foundation and consequences of racism are not rooted in the behavior of black Americans, yesterday or today. They are rooted in an attempt by Europeans and white Americans to exploit and dehumanize the descendants of Africa for monetary gain. This process of universal exploitation of Africa and her descendants continues today by the power elite of this country. In the process of exploiting black Americans, white America has tried to shift the responsibility for the degrading position in which blacks now find themselves away from the oppressors to the oppressed. The White House Conference, especially with its original focus on the Negro family as the main problem with which America must deal, accentuates this process of shifting the burden of the problem.
>
> 2. Regardless of the proposals which stem from this conference, we know that the executive department and the President are not serious about insuring Constitutional rights to black Americans. For example, murderers of civil rights workers and black citizens roam free in this country with the desire to kill more freedom fighters; and the national government claims it is impotent in many situations to bring about justice. For example, police chiefs, sheriffs and state officials who have vitimized black people, beaten and jailed them and further suppressed our dignity are fully aware they were in effect given a blank check by the executive department of the government to inflict these lawless acts upon Negroes, since it is common knowledge throughout the South that killing a "nigger" is like killing a coon.
>
> 3. We believe that the President has called this conference within the U.S. at a time when U.S. prestige internationally is at a low ebb due to our involvement in the Vietnam civil war, the Dominican Republic, the Congo, South Africa and other parts of the Third World.
>
> We cannot be a party to attempts by the White House to use black Americans to recoup prestige lost internationally.
>
> 4. Our organization is opposed to the war in Vietnam and we cannot in good conscience meet with the chief policy maker of the Vietnam war to discuss human rights in this country when he flagrantly violates the human rights of colored people in Vietnam.
>
> 5. We reaffirm our belief that people who suffer must make the decisions about how to change and direct their lives. We therefore call upon all black Americans to begin building independent political, economic and cultural institutions that they will control and use as instruments of social change in this country.[1]

Stokely Carmichael further emphasized the new policy of black separatism by telling the press in Atlanta that the Black Panther Party would protect its own people and refuse to seek Federal protection in the election coming in

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

November. Protection would be provided by: ". . . the toughest Negroes we can find in Watts, Harlem, Chicago, and Washington. . . . We have discovered the Justice Department cats just take notes and never do anything to protect our people, or to stop voting frauds by whites."[1]

In August, 1966, the New York Times published major excerpts from a "confidential" position paper prepared in advance of the Nashville meeting by the Carmichael faction of SNCC.[2] These excerpts revealed that the black separatist arguments voiced at the Nashville meeting were prepared in advance of the meeting, and they did much to clarify the new philosophy.

The paper begins with the argument that a myth exists that the Negro is lazy and incapable of liberating himself. This myth, it argues, is a part of the American experience, and any white entering the movement "has these concepts in his mind about black people if only subconsciously."[3] Whites, furthermore, have never allowed blacks to organize themselves in this country and a stereotype has been created that "blacks cannot organize themselves." White interference has caused a major problem for blacks. "Blacks, in fact, feel intimidated by the presence of whites because of the power that whites have over their lives. One white person can come into a meeting of black people and change the complexion of that meeting. . . . People would immediately start talking about 'brotherhood,' 'love,' etc. . . ." Whites, then, intimidate blacks, and since it is necessary for blacks to express themselves freely, whites must be excluded. "What does it mean if black people, once having the right to organize, are not allowed to organize themselves? It means that blacks' ideas about inferiority are being reinforced." For whites to continue to organize blacks "means in the eyes of the black community that whites are the 'brains' behind the movement and blacks cannot function without whites." Whites, then, can no longer have any leading role in organization of blacks. Any such role is paternalistic and reinforces existing racist stereotypes. Whites who are concerned with racism should go where the problem originates--with the white community. "The white people should go into white communities where the whites have created power for the express [purpose] of denying blacks human dignity and self-determination."

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[1] Ibid., pp. 78-79.

[2] New York Times, August 5, 1966, p. 10.

[3] Ibid. The following statements and quotations from the excerpts are all to be found on p. 10.

Negroes must organize themselves and direct their own affairs. "If we are to proceed toward true liberation, we must cut ourselves off from white people. We must form our own institutions, credit unions, co-ops, political parties, write our own histories." SNCC must avoid the fate of the reactionary NAACP which has been subverted by whites. "SNCC, by allowing whites to remain in the organization, can have its efforts subverted in the same manner. . . . Indigenous leadership cannot be built with whites in the positions they now hold." Yet the exclusion of whites is qualified. "These facts do not mean that whites cannot help. They can participate on a voluntary basis. We can contract work out to them, but in no way can they participate on a policy-making level." Leadership and control must be in the hands of blacks: ". . . we propose that our organization (S.N.C.C.) should be black-staffed, black-controlled, and black-financed." The alternative to black control is to "fall into the tentacles of the white power complex that controls this country." Increasingly: ". . . . we see black people in this country being used as a tool of the white liberal establishment. Liberal whites have not begun to address themselves to the real problems of black people in this country; witness their bewilderment, fear and anxiety when nationalism is mentioned concerning black people." Moreover, "previous solutions to black problems in this country have been made in the interests of those whites dealing with these problems." "Whites can only subvert our true search and struggle for self-determination, self-identification, and liberation in this country."

Whites impose a typranny on blacks. For too long "have we allowed white people to interpret the importance and meaning of the cultural aspects of our society. We have allowed them to tell us what was good about our Afro-American music, art and literature." White standards are not superior to black standards:

> We are not, after all, the ones who are responsible for a genocidal war in Vietnam; we are not the ones who are responsible for neocolonialism in Africa and Latin America; we are not the ones who held a people in animalistic bondage over 400 years. We reject the American dream as defined by white people and must work to construct an American reality defined by Afro-Americans.

When blacks view whites in America they view 180 million racists. The white radical or intellectual ". . . does not have the courage to admit this. When he admits this reality, then he must also admit his involvement because he is a part of the collective white America." Instead of facing the racist reality of white America, "most white radicals have sought to escape the horrible reality of America by going into the black community and attempting to organize the black people while neglecting the organization of their own people's racist communities." Whites should tidy their own yards first. "There can be no talk of 'hooking up' unless black people organize blacks and white people organize whites. If these conditions are met then perhaps at some later date--and if we are going in the same direction--talks about exchange of personnel, coalition, and other meaningful alliances can be discussed."

The tyranny that whites impose on blacks in this nation, is in reality, comparable to colonialism.

> Again we feel that S.N.C.C. and the civil rights movement in general is in many aspects similar to the anticolonial situations in the African and Asian countries. We have the whites in the movement corresponding to the white civil servants and missionaries in the colonial countries who have worked with the colonial people for a longer period of time and have developed a paternalistic attitude toward them. The reality of the colonial people taking over their own lives and controlling their own destiny must be faced. Having to move aside and letting this natural process of growth and development take place must be faced.

It is curious how ". . . whites in this country can champion anti-colonialism in other countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, but when black people move toward similar goals of self-determination in this country they are viewed as racists and anti-white by these same progressive whites." This attitude can be traced back to the ". . . era of the slave revolts when every white man was a potential deputy or sheriff or guardian of the state. Because when black people got together among themselves to work out their problems, it became a threat to white people, because such meetings were potential slave revolts." This white attitude of fear of collective black action is now part of the white psyche of this country. Blacks, therefore, must free themselves and lead themselves. Blacks must define black identity and the relations of blacks to America and the world. A mystique must be created whereby blacks identify with the movement.

> It must be repeated that the whole myth of "Negro citizenship," perpetuated by the white elite, has confused the thinking of radical and progressive blacks and whites in this country. The broad masses of black people react to American society in the same manner as colonial peoples react to the West in Africa, and Latin America, and had the same relationship--that of the colonized toward the colonizer.

In the new SNCC, led by Carmichael, the key words, according to Newfield, were: ". . . independent black power, race pride, black dignity, and the third world."[1] In terms of programs and policies: "The twenty-five whites on the SNCC staff will now organize only poor whites. They will be kept out of the black community. County-wide, independent, all-black political parties will be organized, patterned after the Black Panther party, fashioned by Carmichael in Lowndes County. Implicitly, SNCC has given up on the over-thirty generation of fearful, church-loving Southern Negroes."[2] Instead, SNCC "will now concentrate on organizing the new generation of Negroes, especially those on Southern campuses and in the riot-packed cities of the North. SNCC will begin to try to fill the void left by the assassination of Malcolm X."[3]

Stokely Carmichael

Stokely Carmichael, leader of the new SNCC, was eleven years old when his parents brought him to the United States from the West Indies in 1952.[4] The family first settled in Harlem, but Stokely's father, a carpenter who moonlighted as a taxi driver and seaman, thought American Negroes were "unambitious," and, despite a distrust of white people, he soon moved his family into an all-white predominantly Italian neighborhood in the East Bronx. They had escaped the black ghetto, but East Bronx was a rough neighborhood too. "By the time I was in the eighth grade I knew all about marijuana and pot."[5] And the whites taught him all the tricks, "how to break into stores, how to steal cars."[1] Meanwhile, Stokely kept his ties with his old friends in Harlem.

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[1] A Prophetic Minority, p. 72.

[2] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[3] Ibid., p. 73.

[4] The following biographical data,uunless otherwise noted, is taken from Robert Penn Warren's interview with Stokely Carmichael in Warren, pp. 390-404.

[5] Ibid., p. 391.

Then in 1956, Stokely Carmichael qualified for the elite Bronx High School of Science, becoming one of about fifty Negroes in some two thousand students. He still kept some of his old friends and did some gang fighting, but his mother told him: "Remember one thing, those guys are white, they'll all make it, and you won't unless you're on top."[2] He worked, made good grades, stayed on top. "Carmichael lived a double life; winning good grades and going to posh parties downtown with his white friends, and running with a wild gang in Harlem, fighting, stealing, smoking pot. His teachers at Bronx High told him he would become 'a brilliant Negro leader'; his Negro friends in Harlem called him a faggot for reading books."[3] In the summer after his freshman year at Bronx: "I stayed in New York City and hung around with all the fellows--the gang--stole cars, gang fighting, and all that nonsense. By about the middle of the summer, I kept thinking, 'I'm going to get into real trouble if I keep this up.' So I started alienating myself from them."[4] By the middle of his sophomore year he had broken his old ties.

Carmichael's fellow students in Bronx High School of Science revealed to him the inadequacy of his own intellectual background. "All these students' fathers had been Harvard, Yale, doctors, dentists, Ph. D.'s."[5] Carmichael responded by reading "anything that anybody mentioned."[6] He soon began to read Marx[1] and began to associate with people on the left, young socialists.[2] But Carmichael's high school fascination with Marxism proved a temporary thing. It was broken, in part, by his early contact with the sit-in movement. When he first read about the sit-ins, early in 1960, his reaction was: "Niggers are always looking to get themselves in the paper, no matter how they do it."[3] He thought they did not know what they were doing, an opinion he kept, thinking that Negroes simply stumbled on to the technique.[4] Within three weeks, however, the sit-ins had spread over much of the South. Carmichael was still unimpressed: "My reaction was: 'Niggers are just like monkeys--one do, all do.'"[5] By April, however, Carmichael was changing his mind, and in May, 1960, when he met some people involved in the sit-ins, he was ready to join. Carmichael went on his first sit-in while still in high school. He describes his reaction:

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 392.

[3] A Prophetic Minority, pp. 78-79.

[4] Warren, p. 394.

[5] Ibid., p. 392.

[6] Ibid.

> I went on a sit-in in Virginia. Very impressed with the kids, their courage. I had always been oriented to the Left, from an economic point of view--not an economic determinist but certainly a great proclivity for that sort of thing. And now I realized that a lot of the kids weren't talking about what I thought they would be talking about. They said--"We have the right to human dignity."
>
> . . . .
>
> So I began to think seriously whether this was an economic problem or whether these students were right, whether non-violence and love was the thing. I never took the approach we've got to teach them to love us. I thought that was nonsense, from the start. But I was impressed by the way they conducted themselves, the way they sat there and took the punishment.
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> . . . .
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> I was really impressed, because when I lived down in Harlem, I learned, you know, that you don't get tapped on the shoulder without turning around.[6]

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[1] SNCC, p. 56.

[2] Warren, p. 392.

[3] Ibid., p. 397.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., pp. 397-398.

The sit-ins had an effect on Carmichael; they did not fit into his high school Marxist point of view. But, according to Robert Penn Warren:

> Carmichael had already begun, in any case, to drift from the Left. He had begun to feel that the Communists who expected the Negroes to start a civil rights revolution which could be developed into "The Revolution" weren't really sincere about Negroes, "were just trying to use Negroes." And he made no sense out of any Communist attempt to outline a program. The first dip into the sit-ins had shaken his economic theories; and now he elected Howard University, even though he didn't want to go to a Negro university and "wasn't sure that Howard could give me a good education," because there he could keep working in the Movement.[1]

In December, 1960, Carmichael went to Fayette County, Tennessee, and was impressed again with the courage and moral force of the demonstrators. Then, in May, 1961, he joined the Freedom Rides and confronted Southern mobs: ". . . one old lady in particular, she was about seventy years old, shaking a cane viciously, just trembling all over, and I just kept looking at her, not because I wanted to antagonize her, but because I really couldn't believe this."[2] People were yelling, "I'll kill you, I'll kill you!" "And I kept thinking, why, why, why. A naive question, but it's something that still comes back, because you can't find the answer to questions that bother you--really a problem."[3] Carmichael survived the mob, but he was put in Mississippi's Parchman state penitentiary, itself an emotional experience. It was one of more than fifteen arrests in Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Maryland, Virginia, and New York.[4]

From 1960 to 1964 Carmichael was both a student at Howard--graduating with a major in philosophy--and a worker for SNCC. By the summer of 1964 he was one of SNCC's leaders, and he was appointed director of SNCC activities in the Second Congressional District of Mississippi.[1] Jack Newfield relates that:

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[1] Ibid., p. 398.

[2] Ibid., p. 399.

[3] Ibid., p. 400.

[4] Carmichael and Hamilton, p. 199.

> As writers and journalists poured over that wounded land that summer, legends and tales of Stokely began to filter into the national press. That he was SNCC's wildest driver quickly became part of the myth. In The New Abolitionists, Howard Zinn wrote that Stokely "would stride, cool and smiling through Hell, philosophizing all the way." By the end of the summer, there was a 100-member national organization with the initials FASC--standing for the Friends and Admirers of Stokely Carmichael.[2]

In January, 1965, Carmichael moved to Lowndes County, Alabama, where he helped organize the Lowndes County Freedom Organization and the Black Panther Party. In May, 1966, Carmichael's faction of SNCC became dominant, and Carmichael became chairman, a post he used to effectively mould SNCC policy until he stepped down in May, 1967, to be replaced by H. Rap Brown, who promised to continue his policies.[3] Carmichael, whatever his earlier opinions, achieved a leadership position in SNCC and a prominence in the nation as the foremost apostle of "black power." Under his leadership, SNCC and then CORE divided the civil rights movement and then the nation with that most ambiguous rallying cry.

Introduction of the "Black Power" Slogan

Events moved rapidly after Stokely Carmichael became SNCC's leader. In June, 1966, James Meredith, who had integrated the University of Mississippi with the help of United States marshals and troops, began a march to Mississippi from Memphis, Tennessee, in order to dispel the fear of

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1. A Prophetic Minority, p. 79.

2. Ibid.

3. Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), May 13, 1967, p. 18.

Mississippi Negroes. Barely into Mississippi he was ambushed and shot twice with birdshot. The earliest reports of the incident stated that Meredith had been killed and, true to the pattern established in many other crises, the national civil rights leaders decided to dramatize and exploit the issue by continuing the march in Meredith's stead. It might have been anticipated that the Meredith shooting would unify the civil rights movement and the more liberal elements of the nation once again in outrage at the savage treatment of Negroes in portions of the South. The reverse proved true. By the end of the march the civil rights movement was clearly fragmented, the liberal coalition was split, and the proposed civil rights act of 1966 was well on its way to defeat. In all this, a great part was played by Stokely Carmichael's introduction of a new, ambiguous, and divisive slogan--"black power."

The Meredith march "went national" almost immediately after the shooting. Dr. King reports that he and Floyd McKissick, National Director of CORE, flew to Memphis together from Atlanta and jointly persuaded James Meredith that the march should continue and involve the whole civil rights movement. As they were preparing to leave Meredith's hospital room, Stokely Carmichael entered and expressed his concern to the wounded Meredith. The three, King, McKissick and Carmichael, made initial arrangements for the march.[1] Once underway, evidences of dissension appeared almost immediately. Some of the marchers were expressing sentiments that departed from the older tenets of the movement. Dr. King reports some of the comments of the first day:

> "I'm not for that nonviolence stuff any more," shouted one of the younger activists.

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[1] Where Do We Go From Here, pp. 24-25.

> "If one of these damn white Mississippi crackers touches me, I'm gonna knock the hell out of him," shouted another.
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> Later a discussion of the composition of the march came up.
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> "This should be an all-black march," said one marcher. "We don't need any more white phonies and liberals invading our movement. This is our march."[1]

Even the theme song of the movement, "We Shall Overcome," revealed a split between the marchers.

> Once during the afternoon we stopped to sing "We Shall Overcome." The voices rang out with all the traditional fervor, the glad thunder and gentle strength that had always characterized the singing of this noble song. But when we came to the stanza which speaks of "black and white together," the voices of a few of the marchers were muted. I asked them later why they refused to sing that verse. The retort was:
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> "This is a new day, we don't sing those words any more. In fact, the whole song should be discarded. Not 'We Shall Overcome,' but 'We Shall Overrun.'"[2]

To Martin Luther King: ". . . the words fell on my ears like strange music from a foreign land. My hearing was not attuned to the sound of such bitterness."[3]

On the first evening the marchers returned to Memphis to stay the night. The leaders spoke to a mass meeting, each defining the march and its purposes in his own way. The major speakers were Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Whitney Young of the National Urban League, Floyd McKissick of CORE, Stokely Carmichael of SNCC and Martin Luther King of SCLC. As Newsweek reports the meeting:

> "If you start hating all white men, you're going to waste your energies," Wilkins said--and he was applauded. "Let us be mad at people who don't register and vote, who don't march to the libraries and PTA meetings, who don't go to school and stay in school," Young counseled--and *he* was applauded. McKissick paraphrased the inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty, suggested that they "break that young lady's leg and throw her in the Mississippi"--and *he* was applauded. "We've got to tell the Federal government about all those lies they have been telling us," cried Carmichael. "When they needed Meredith they sent in Federal

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 25.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 25-26.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 26.

> troops, but when they didn't need him, he was just a nigger in the cotton patch. . . . We need power!" And he was applauded. "We have power," King intoned, "and it isn't in bricks and guns. We have another weapon--nonviolence." He was applauded, too.[1]

After the meeting the leaders met again at a Negro motel in Memphis and the debate continued. The debate apparently focused on two issues: the goals of the march and the tactics to be employed on the march. Dr. King's report of the meeting dwells on the latter. According to this report, Dr. King began the discussion with a plea for nonviolence. Members of the Deacons for Defense, supported by some CORE and SNCC members, "contended that self-defense was essential and that therefore nonviolence should not be a prerequisite for participation in the march."[2] The question of participation by whites was raised next. "Stokely Carmichael contended that the inclusion of whites in the march should be de-emphasized and that the dominant appeal should be made for black participation."[3] King argued for white participation. In the end Dr. King took the position that: "I could not in good conscience agree to continue my personal involvement and that of SCLC in the march if it were not publicly affirmed that it was based on nonviolence and the participation of both black and white."[4] Dr. King reports that Floyd McKissick and Stokely Carmichael agreed to these principles "as far as the march was concerned."[5] On that basis, King was willing to continue the march.

The debate over march goals is reported in Newsweek. According to that account, Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young ". . . argued for limiting it /a statement of march aims/ to a single, pragmatically possible goal: getting a strenthened version of the civil-rights bill through Congress. But the militants produced a strident statement attacking LBJ head-on and ignoring the civil-rights bill altogether."[1] The debate was ended by a compromise: ". . . they /the militants/ toned down the attacks on the person of the President, and we got them to include the bill."[2] But the compromise did not survive long. The following morning the march "manifesto" was delivered to the press.

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[1] "The March Meredith Began," Newsweek, LXVII (June 20, 1966), 29-30.

[2] Where Do We Go From Here, p. 26.

[3] Ibid., p. 27.

[4] Ibid., p. 28.

[5] Ibid., p. 29.

> While it did not call the President names, it was addressed principally to him. It demanded that he saturate 600 Southern counties with Federal voting examiners; it called for a multibillion dollar "freedom budget" to involve the Negro poor in "the making of their own destinies"; it called for sweeping amendments to the rights bill. "This march," it said, "will be a massive public indictment and protest of the failure of American society, the government of the U.S. and the state of Mississippi to 'fulfill these rights'"--the latter phrase a wry echo of LBJ's slogan for the White House Conference.
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> That suited King well enough to sign along with Carmichael and McKissick. But it seemed impossibly broad to the old-liners. "We couldn't even go along with the title 'Manifesto,'" said one; they feared it might remind people of Marx's Communist Manifesto. Young and Wilkins refused to sign. And when the inevitable SOS went out to Bayard Rustin to help with the logistical mess, as he had so masterfully at Washington and Selma, Rustin said no. "If they were to change the basic statement so that all were involved," he said, "I would be the first one there. But in one fell swoop you can't demand the world. Demands must be commensurate with the immediate situation."[3]

One day of marching had been sufficient to reveal fundamental differences in approach among the major civil-rights organizations. Two of those organizations, the NAACP and the National Urban League, felt obliged to withdraw. By the second day, then, the movement had been divided.

For the remaining groups, the debate continued as the march moved deeper into Mississippi. In Greenwood, heart of the SNCC organizing area of 1964, Stokely Carmichael posed a new threat to what unity remained in the movement. Speaking to a large audience, Carmichael first aroused the crowd with an impassioned attack on Mississippi justice[1] and then declared: "Today's the 27th time I've been arrested and I ain't goin' to jail no more. . . . The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin' us is to take over. We been sayin' 'freedom' for six years and we ain't got nothin'. What we gonna start sayin' now is 'black power'!"[2] The crowd echoed: "Black power!" And Carmichael continued: "Ain't nothin' wrong with anything all black, 'cause I'm all black and I'm all good. . . . And from now on, when they ask you what you want, you know what to tell them. . . ." "'Black power!' the crowd roared. 'Black power! Black power! Black power! Black power!'"[3] The phrase had been used before, Dr. King reports, by Richard Wright and others, but "never until that night had it been used as a slogan in the civil rights movement."[4]

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[1] "The March Meredith Began," p. 30.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

The introduction of the slogan "black power" further divided the civil-rights movement. Dr. King recalls that: "For a day or two there was a fierce competition between those who were wedded to the Black Power slogan and those wedded to Freedom Now. Speakers on each side sought desperately to get the crowds to chant their slogan the loudest."[5] Dr. King then asked Carmichael and McKissick to discuss the slogan. They agreed and with members of their respective organizations they met in a Catholic parish

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1. Where Do We Go From Here, p. 29.

2. "Black Power!," Newsweek, LXVII (June 27, 1966), 36.

3. Ibid.

4. Where Do We Go From Here, p. 29.

5. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

house in Yazoo City.[1] Dr. King reports that he pleaded for five hours with others to "abandon the Black Power slogan."[2] He argued that "black power" carried connotations of violence.[3] "Stokely /Carmichael/ replied by saying that the question of violence versus nonviolence was irrelevant. The real question was the need for black people to consolidate their political and economic resources to achieve power. 'Power,' he said, 'is the only thing respected in this world, and we must get it at any cost.'"[4] That statement indicated that nonviolence, as a philosophy, was dead in SNCC. Stokely Carmichael concluded his statements by telling Dr. King: "Martin, I deliberately decided to raise this issue on the march in order to give it a national forum, and force you to take a stand for Black Power."[5] King responded: "I have been used before. One more time won't hurt."[6] When the arguments had been completed, most of the SCLC staff agreed with Dr. King that "black power" was a dangerous and undesirable slogan for the movement; most of the CORE and SNCC staff agreed with Stokely Carmichael and Floyd McKissick that it was a good and desirable slogan.[7] And yet a compromise was reached. Neither "black power" nor "freedom now" would be used as a slogan for the rest of the march.[8] "But while the chant died out, the press kept the debate going. News stories now centered, not on the injustices of Mississippi, but on the apparent ideological division in the civil rights movement."[9] As early as June 7, 1966, Representative Emanuel Celler of

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 30.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_., p. 30.

[4] _Ibid_.

[5] _Ibid_., p. 31.

[6] _Ibid_.

[7] _Ibid_., pp. 31-32.

[8] _Ibid_., p. 32.

[9] _Ibid_.

Brooklyn, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and a sponsor of President Johnson's 1966 civil rights bill, reacted to statements becoming common in SNCC and elsewhere by evaluating their effect on the pending legislation:

> But when the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, with its fiery chairman, Stokely Carmichael, deprecates integration and demands black nationalism, and when others of the same ilk, like the Black Muslims and the Black Panthers and pamphleteers like LeRoy Jones and James Baldwin, accentuate the theory of blacks for black and the devil take the whites and that "integration is irrelevant," the task of getting any effective civil rights bill passed at this session of Congress will be thorny, if not impossible.[1]

Passage of the act proved, not thorny, but impossible.

Shortly after the Meredith march CORE held its annual convention. One of the featured speakers was Stokely Carmichael, new leader of SNCC and author of the now famous "black power" slogan. Calling for "black power," Carmichael denounced the "establishment" and white liberals. He said:

> "We will define our own tactics whether they like it or not."
>
> He asserted that integration today was an irrelevant question and that it was time for Negroes to talk about things that are important to them and to begin to understand the contradictions in American society.
>
> If whites want to integrate, he said, they should send their own children from Westchester County schools into Harlem.
>
> Mr. Carmichael said that Negroes serving in the United States armed forces in Vietnam must be regarded as black mercenaries of the Government.
>
> He said he was not prepared to discuss nonviolence with white people so long as "the United States continues to commit violence in Vietnam."[2]

On the same day he was quoted as describing the proposed civil rights act of 1966 as a "sham," as "totally useless and unnecessary."[3] "President Johnson," he added, "is trying to take himself off the spot again."[4] He explained

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1. New York Times, June 8, 1966, p. 26C.

2. Ibid., July 2, 1966, p. 24.

3. Ibid. 4. Ibid.

SNCC's position on the pending legislation by saying, according to the New York Times, that "the Attorney General already had the power to file lawsuits to get Negroes represented on Southern juries and that President Johnson could ban 80 per cent of housing segregation by signing an Executive Order.[1]

For good or evil, Stokely Carmichael had made "black power" the slogan of a portion of the Negro protest movement. As a slogan, it was ambiguous, meaning racism, violence, even racial warfare to some, but only Negro political and economic organization to others. Was "black power" a call to arms or was it only a call to organize? Opinion was divided. Gene Roberts, reporting to the New York Times, helped to explain the confusion surrounding the term. Stokely Carmichael, he pointed out, spoke of "tearing down courthouses" in the heat of a speech, and Willie Ricks, another SNCC worker, said that "'white blood will flow if black blood does.'"[2] Then: "After the speeches are over and the emotionalism is gone, Mr. Ricks and Mr. Carmichael spend hours explaining that they are not anti-white but are simply trying to make the Negro feel pride in his race."[3] As Mr. Roberts indicates, the ambiguity of the phrase "black power" is derived in part from the fact that, from the first, SNCC speakers presented at least two versions of black power, one relatively moderate and the other quite extreme. For purposes of analysis, the two can be separated. The more moderate version, calling for the separate but not racist political and economic mobilization of blacks, was perhaps dominant through the summer of 1966. The more extreme version, embodying an appeal to violence and finally even guerilla warfare, was given some expression from the beginning, but it achieved dominance in the public statements of SNCC leaders in the summer of 1967. In that summer the talk of SNCC leaders turned increasingly to violence and calls for rebellion.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., June 28, 1966, p. 23C. [3] Ibid.

"Black Power," the Moderate Version: Cultural, Political and Economic Mobilization Within the Democratic Structure

Stokely Carmichael proclaimed in Atlanta, on May 23, 1966, that: "Integration is beside the point because it only gives us a chance to sit next to people like Jim Clark (the sheriff in Selma, Ala.)."[1] He then declared SNCC's new goals: "What we want now is power--social, economic and political power."[2] That same month, Carmichael elaborated on these views. Reacting to Mrs. George Wallace's landslide victory in the Alabama Democratic Party's gubernatorial primary, Carmichael said: "The Democratic party voted racist once again."[3] And he added: "You don't work with whites and what they've built up, you don't imitate white politics because white politics are corrupt. . . . Negroes have to view themselves as colonies, and right now is the time for them to quit being white men's colonies and become independent."[4] Integration, he explained, was not a goal as it led, at best, to tokenism--"so integration, you see, is just a subterfuge for white supremacy."[5] And Negroes, he added, must act separately. "'We decided in

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1. Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), May 24, 1966, p. 15.

2. Ibid.

3. "Growl of the Panther," Newsweek, LXVII (May 30, 1966), p. 33.

4. Ibid., pp. 33, 36.

5. Ibid., p. 36.

Nashville,' Carmichael reported, 'that whites cannot organize in black communities any more.'"[1] Even coalition with whites was seen as undesirable:

> Coalition's no good. . . . "Cause what happens when a couple of Negroes join in with a bunch of whites? They get absorbed, that's what. They have to surrender too much to join. . . . Black people got to act as a black community, and the Democratic and Republican Parties are completely irrelevant to them. I know we're gonna be on the outside now, we're gonna be on our own. But we've learned, in the past six years of trying to redeem the white man, that we don't have any alternative now but to go this way."[2]

The New Yorker's reporter gave a more moderate interpretation of what Carmichael was calling for during the Meredith march:

> What he had in mind throughout the march was a Populist movement in the South; White S.N.C.C. workers would address themselves to the white poor, black S.N.C.C. workers would address themselves to the black poor, and since the blacks would outnumber the whites, the new Populists would naturally be under Negro leadership, and would present an encouraging example of Negro effectiveness to Negroes throughout the country.[3]

In this view, what Carmichael had in mind was in fact eventual coalition of poor whites and poor blacks. For the time being, however, the call was for separate black parties as in Alabama and for black unity. In addition, Carmichael called for pride in being black. As he put it during the Meredith march: "It is time to stop being ashamed of being black. It is time to stop trying to be white. When you see your daughter playing in the fields, with her nappy hair, and her wide nose, and her thick lips, tell her she is beautiful. *Tell your daughter she is beautiful*."[4]

Statements of the need for black separatism and pride in blackness inevitably led to charges that SNCC had become racist. Stokely Carmichael denied those charges. Nicholas von Hoffman reported one such denial:

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] "Notes and Comment," *The New Yorker*, XLII (July 16, 1966), 24.

[4] *Ibid*.

> "Black nationalism only means one thing in this country, that you're anti-white," he says. "That's the trick bag the press is trying to get me into. But I'm not anti-white."
>
> "Every group in this country owns its own neighborhoods but us. The Jews, the Italians, the Germans. The Irish took over Boston and nobody asked them what they were going to do statewide where they weren't in a majority. Well, we're going to elect sheriffs where we can, where we're in a majority."[1]

The New York Times reported another denial of racism:

> Mr. Carmichael, leading exponent of "black power," denies that the concept is either one of extremism or a variant of black nationalism. It is, rather, he says, the Negro, when in the majority, "taking over the power structure according to the democratic process . . . taking it the way everyone else took it." When the Negro is in the minority, he adds, he must organize "independently outside both parties, then move into those parties as a strong bloc vote to force those politicians who do not speak for his needs to speak for his needs."[2]

"Black power," then, was merely bloc voting within the ordinary political channels in order to gain power in the same manner in which other ethnic groups had achieved it.

In August, 1966, Stokely Carmichael restated the major theme of the moderate version of "black power." Politically:

> Black power means that in Lowndes County . . . if a Negro is elected tax assessor, he will be able to tax equitably and channel funds for the building of better roads and schools serving Negroes. If elected sheriff, he can end police brutality. . . . On the state and national level, it means that black people can say to white authorities, "We need X million dollars to fix our roads, and we have X million votes behind us." Without power, they can only say, "Please--we need it. . . ."[3]

In terms of integration:

> Too often the goal "integration" has been based on a complete acceptance of the fact that *in order to have* a decent house or education, Negroes must move into a *white* neighborhood or go to a *white* school. What does this mean? First of all, it reinforces among both Negroes and whites the idea that "white" is automatically better and

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1. *Washington Post*, June 18, 1966, p. A4.

2. *New York Times*, June 26, 1966, p. 2E.

3. "A Power Player Sets the Goals," *Newsweek*, LXVII (August 22, 1966), 36.

> that "black" is by definition inferior. . . . Such situations will not change until Negroes have political power--to control their own school boards, for example. With the achievement of such control, Negroes can become truly equal--and integration /is then/ relevant. . . .[1]

And in terms of racism:

> "Pro-black" has never meant "anti-white"--unless whites make it so. . . . We continue to believe, as always, that SNCC's leadership must be black. We have concluded that Negroes make the best organizers in Southern Negro communities because they encourage the idea that Negroes *can do something for themselves*. This releases the energy and creativity which produce change. . . . We need and welcome the support of everyone, white and black, North and South.[2]

In the spring and summer of 1967 reports of Carmichael and other SNCC leaders calling for violence or defiance of the law grew more and more frequent. Nevertheless, as late as May, 1967, Stokely Carmichael repeated the moderate version of "black power" in an interview with *Life* reporter Gordon Parks.

> I /Gordon Parks/ finally asked Stokely, "What do you *really* mean by Black Power?"
>
> "I've given up trying to explain it," he said. "The whites never really listen when I do, anyway."
>
> "But I'm not white and I'm listening," I insisted.
>
> "*For the last time*," he said, "Black Power means black people coming together to form a political force and either electing representatives or forcing their representatives to speak their needs. It's an economic and physical bloc that can exercise its strength in the black community instead of letting the job go to the Democratic or Republican parties or a white-controlled black man set up as a puppet to represent black people. *We* pick the brother and make sure he fulfills *our* needs. Black power doesn't mean anti-white, violence, separatism or any other racist things the press says it means. It's saying, "look, buddy, we're not laying a vote on you unless you lay so many schools, hospitals, playgrounds and jobs on us."[3]

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1. *Ibid*.

2. *Ibid*.

3. Gordon Parks, "Whip of Black Power," *Life*, LXII (May 19, 1967), 82.

"Black Power," the Extreme Version: A Call to Defiance, Violence and Rebellion

"Black power," as a slogan, was born on the Meredith march through Mississippi in June, 1966. There were some indications, from the beginning, that those who were committed to the new slogan were not committed to the old nonviolence. On that march, Stokely Carmichael called on all Negroes in Vietnam to come back to the United States to fight.[1] As he explained it:

> If I was a white man with a million dollars, I'd be fighting in Vietnam because then capitalism would mean something to me. . . . I'm poor and capitalism means nothing to me and I'm not going [to Vietnam]. Every black brother and every black uncle should come home now and fight here because here is where the fight is.[2]

These words are inflammatory, and can be read as a counsel to defy the law, but they are ambiguous as to the meaning of the word "fight." Later, in Greenwood, Mississippi, when Carmichael was arrested for defying an order not to erect tents on a school grounds, he "left the grounds screaming, 'I want this town turned upside down.'"[3] A few days later Willie Ricks, one of the more militant SNCC speakers, was quoted as saying: "We're gonna get some of that white blood."[4] The latter statements, though more specific than the first, can be seen as words spoken in the heat of passion or fear that are not representative of the policy of SNCC leaders in their calmer moments. They were, however, departures from the carefully nonviolent messages the civil rights leaders ordinarily gave.

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1. Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), June 10, 1966, p. 3.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., June 17, 1966, p. 19.

4. Ibid., June 22, 1966, p. 5.

In late August, 1966, Carmichael again spoke in terms of violence. He declared: "In Cleveland [Ohio] they're building stores with no windows--all brick. I don't know what they think they'll accomplish. It just means we have to move from Molotov cocktails to dynamite."[1] And to blacks in Washington, D.C.: "If we don't get the vote [home rule], we're going to burn down the city."[2] It is difficult to square the use of such language with a desire for nonviolence, especially in a nation where the summer race riot had become a pattern. In Atlanta on September 6, 1966, Carmichael was told of an incident in which a Negro fleeing from a police officer was shot and wounded. Rushing to the scene, Carmichael then issued an appeal over radio station WAOK to Negroes to demonstrate in protest. His later activities and words are a matter of dispute. A Negro police officer, Claude Dixon, charged that Carmichael "made inflammatory remarks over the loudspeaker of a sound truck just before and during the riot."[3] Police Captain Morris Redding testified that Carmichael shouted: "Black brothers, we have got to join together. The white cops are murdering our black brothers. Come, follow me. We will take what we want."[4] Carmichael admitted that he had urged Negroes to "turn out and tear up the city," but he explained that he had meant "tear up their old way of life," and he denied he had intended to start a riot.[5] Whatever his intentions and the effects of his statements, a riot did break out during which about a thousand Negroes "pelted police with rocks and bottles and toppled Mayor Ivan Allen from a car."[6]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., October 2, 1966, p. 8.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., September 10, 1966, p. 11.

The cold blast of winter cooled the riots in the cities, but it did not cool Carmichael's rhetoric. He began a tour of universities and colleges speaking on "black power" and Vietnam. In Berkeley, speaking to a predominantly white audience, he concentrated on opposition to the war in Vietnam and he concluded by saying that the only way for young Americans to stop the war was to say: "To hell with the draft," to which he added: "And I am saying, 'To hell with the draft!'"[1] Carmichael was apparently advocating definance of the draft law and that counsel differed from the civil disobedience counseled by the nonviolence movement in that there was no mention of voluntarily accepting the penalty for disobedience and no insistence that disrespect for the law as such was not intended. The niceties of the earlier approach were ignored; the emphasis, now, was simply on defiance.

The statements of Stokely Carmichael and his successor, H. Rap Brown, grew increasingly strident in the spring and summer of 1967. Carmichael, speaking to Miles College students in Birmingham on April 4, 1967, said Negroes were not bound by laws legislated by whites, and he added: "To hell with the laws of the United States."[2] More moderately, he argued that the students should take part in demonstrations because: "If you don't wake up, man, your brothers in the ghettos are going to wake up with matches."[3] But the rest of Carmichael's advice was more inflammatory. When asked what a Negro should do if mistreated, Carmichael replied: "If a white man tries to walk over you, kill him." And, "One match and you can retaliate. Burn, baby, burn."[4] Until there is peace for Negroes, he added, SNCC is against

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1. Ibid., October 30, 1966, p. 15.

2. Ibid., April 15, 1967, p. 32.

3. Ibid. 4. Ibid.

peace for anyone and: "We're going to tear the cities up."[1]

Carmichael's Birmingham comments led Art Kenney, news director of Mobile radio station WRG, to file a formal complaint in Federal Court accusing him of advocating the overthrow of the United States Government,[1] but Carmichael was now on his way to Nashville where his speeches were to raise a storm of controversy and, in the opinion of some, lead directly to the three nights of rioting that occurred concurrently with his visit. In August, 1967, a Nashville Police Captain, John A. Sorace, testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee that "police informants were able to predict the Nashville rioting with remarkable accuracy and also to direct police to SNCC headquarters where as they said Molotov cocktails were found."[2] He added that before the riot SNCC workers "came in from all over the country."[3] While the rioting still continued, Stokely Carmichael was off to Tougaloo, Mississippi, where he described the rioting:

> It is not a riot, it is a rebellion. You ought to be proud of your black brothers as Fisk [a Negro college in Nashville]. The days of a hunkie cop running into our neighborhood, beating us up and running out are gone. We want to instill in our people the right to fight back on anybody who messes with us.[4]

By May 29, 1967, Carmichael's version of what had happened had changed and the rebellion he had applauded had become a plot by the Nashville police to start a riot during which SNCC leaders could be assassinated. Carmichael, it is reported, stated that police initiated the trouble around Fisk to draw himself and other SNCC members out into the streets "so they could shoot us down."[5] The Nashville police saw things differently. Captain

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[1] Ibid., April 16, 1967, p. 10.

[2] Ibid., August 4, 1967, p. 1.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., April 12, 1967, p. 20.

[5] Ibid., May 30, 1967, p. 7.

John Sorace, head of the intelligence division, testified on May 29 that SNCC planned to "organize Negro gangs trained in judo and the use of firearms to create riots in Nashville."[1] He added that SNCC planned "to instruct rioters in the creation and use of Molotov cocktails."[2]

By April 29, 1967, Carmichael was in Cincinnati, Ohio. Cincinnati Chief of Police, Col. Jacob Schott, testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee on August 2, 1967, that speeches by Carmichael and his successor, H. Rap Brown, had "stirred" the violence in that city. "Immediately after a speech by Carmichael in Cincinnati on April 29 riotous conditions prevailed. Police were stoned, a police car was overturned, fire bombs were thrown."[3] The rioting and violence continued intermittently for almost two weeks, then it broke out with such violence that the National Guard was brought in. "We about had things under control again when [Rap] Brown came in. On June 15 he made a speech charging the city had declared war on the Negro people and that they had to fight back."[4] Following the speech, rioting grew in violence and continued through July. On August 2 Col. Schott said, "There is no end in sight."[5] The same hearing that elicited this testimoney heard a tape recording of one of Brown's speeches in which he shouted: "Take your violence to the hunky" [a term of derision for whites].[6]

By May, 1967, Newsweek could summarize Carmichael's message as follows:

> . . . black America is the white man's colony, held in thrall by its fear of the master class and by its paralyzing doubts about itself.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., August 3, 1967, p. 1.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

> Carmichael, accordingly, has cast himself as a sort of itinerant shock therapist. "We're all caught up in rhetoric, we don't have a program," frets one SNCC staffer. But Carmichael's program is rhetoric, and his language today is, if anything, more inflammatory than it was when he and his black-power preachments burst on the national consciousness a year ago.
>
> He shrills at the whole pantheon of American heroes, from Christopher Columbus ("a dumb honky") through George Washington ("a honky who had slaves") and Abe Lincoln ("another honky") to Lyndon Johnson ("a buffoon"). He urges Negroes watching Tarzan on TV to "yell for the black people to come together and beat the hell out of him." "To hell with the laws of the United States," he tells black audiences. He characterizes riots as "rebellions," insists that the black man need not apologize for them, and exhorts: "If a honky tries to shoot you, kill him before God gets the news." At the drop of a slogan, he will set a crowd chanting endlessly against the Vietnam war: "Hell no we won't go!"[1]

That same week Life published an article on Carmichael by Gordon Parks. By this account, Carmichael was still opposed to violence, but his actions and statements were calculated to inflame the emotions. Carmichael, by this report, speaks in Nashville and a riot starts; he parades in Harlem to celebrate Malcolm X on the second anniversary of his death; he flies to Bimini to talk with Adam Clayton Powell; he goes to Puerto Rico to give his support to the nationalists who seek independence; he stands before the United Nations building "pouring invective on Johnson, McNamara, Rusk and the Vietnam war--'Hell, no! We ain't going.'"[2] In Watts, Carmichael adds to the anti-Vietnam theme: "McNamara is trying to thin us out. Calls it 'black urban removal.' Well, I've got news for Mister Mac. Ain't no Vietcong ever called me nigger . . . and if I'm going to do any fighting it's gonna be right here at home. We will not fight in Vietnam and run in Georgia!"[3] Later: "To black people all over, the U.S. military in Vietnam is international white supremacy."[4] The same article indicated a major change in the emotion fueling the movement. As Carmichael put it: "Americans cannot face reality. They won't admit to their racism. But it was racism that got me involved in this movement--not love. Maybe we should't be ashamed of hate. Like love, it's a human emotion even if it has a dangerous energy."[1] The rhetoric of Carmichael was well-designed to exploit the energy of that emotion.

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[1] "Which Way for the Negro?," pp. 27-28.

[2] Parks, p. 76A.

[3] Ibid., p. 77.

[4] Ibid., p. 82.

On May 12, 1967, Stokely Carmichael stepped down from his position as chairman of SNCC. He was replaced in that post by H. Rap Brown, a firebrand who pledged to continue Carmichael's "black power" and anti-Vietnam policies.[2] "We shall build a strong nationwide black anti-draft program. . . . We see our struggle here in America as an integral part of the worldwide movement of all oppressed people, such as in Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique, South Africa and Latin America."[3] The leadership had changed, but the point of view was the same. Carmichael ended the month by declaring: "There is no need to go to Vietnam and shoot somebody who a honky says is your enemy. . . . We're going to shoot the cops who are shooting our black brothers in the back in this country. That is where we're going."[4]

In the following month SNCC was connected with riots in Cincinnati, Dayton and Atlanta. Col. Schott, Chief of Police in Cincinnati, was later to testify that Carmichael had stirred the violence in that city in late April and Brown had encouraged its continuance in a speech in the city on

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), May 13, 1967, p. 18.

[3] Ibid.

[4] "We're Going to Shoot the Cops," U.S. News and World Report, LXII (May 29, 1967), 10.

June 15.[1] Soon after making his speech in Cincinnati, Brown appeared in Dayton.

> The Dayton violence broke out shortly after Rap Brown, national director of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee addressed a rally of the Ohio Freedom Movement and said, "Let's get the pressure off Cincinnati and on to Dayton." An associate said he was in Dayton "to make white men get on their knees."[2]

Meanwhile, in Alabama, Carmichael was leading a series of marches on the state Capitol. When stopped by police he shouted: "Your enemy is Lurleen Wallace."[3] And he added: "Any time they give a black man a gun and tell him to shoot his enemy and he don't shoot Lurleen and George and little junior, he's a fool."[4] Later in the month SNCC attentions turned to Atlanta. Stokely Carmichael was arrested on Sunday, June 18, for ". . . failing to obey a police order, and figured in several incidents after that. Monday, shortly after he appeared at a rally, a disturbance broke out and a Negro youth was shot by a Negro policeman. Later that night, after Carmichael spoke to another rally, the rioting began."[5] During the rally, "Stokely Carmichael urged Negroes to join in 'revolution' against whites."[6] The rioting continued for two nights leaving one person dead and nine injured.[7] On Wednesday, with the situation still tense, SNCC worker Willie Ricks "told Negroes at the shopping center /the Dixie Hills center, the focus of the earlier rioting/ that the Dixie Hills Supermarket 'had to go.'"[8] "A short time later the Molotov cocktail landed in a burst of flames atop the supermarket."[1] The fire was extinguished and the rioting was halted.

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[1] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), August 3, 1967, p. 1.

[2] Ibid., June 15, 1967, p. 1.

[3] Ibid., June 14, 1967, p. 1.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., June 21, 1967, p. 4.

[6] Ibid., p. 1.

[7] Ibid., p. 4.

[8] Ibid.

In July, 1967, riots broke out in cities all across the country. The most destructive were in Newark and Detroit, but others raged simultaneously. On July 25, 1967, for example, rioting continued in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Toledo, Pontiac, Flint, Rochester, New York City, Houston, and was ending in Cambridge, Maryland, after arrival of National Guard troops.[2] To blame all these riots on SNCC's limited personnel would surely be to attribute more influence to them than they in fact had. SNCC people were active in this period, however, and the influence they did exert appears to have been in the direction of violence rather than moderation. In the "black power" conference held in Newark immediately after the rioting there had ended, H. Rap Brown urged blacks to "wage guerilla war on the honkie white man," and added "I love violence."[3] Life reported his comments as follows: "The white man don't like nothing black but a Cadillac. . . . We must wage guerilla war on these honkies."[4] And: "No one has to tell me how to kill."[5] From the conference in Newark, Brown went to Cambridge, Maryland. There, according to Cambridge Police Chief Bryce Kinnamon, Brown "was the sole reason" for rioting that broke out on July 24.[6] Kinnamon testified that "not only did his speech cause it, but he led these people."[7] To support his testimony, Kinnamon played a recording of the Brown speech:

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., July 26, 1967, p. 1.

[4] "Races," Time, XC (July 28, 1967), 9-10.

[5] "Newark: Post-riot Summit for Black Power," Life, LXIII (August 4, 1967), 28.

[6] Memphis Press Scimitar (Tennessee), August 2, 1967, p. 1.

[7] Ibid.

> "It's time for Cambridge to explode, man," the voice in the recorded speech shouted.
>
> In words muffled by cheers, the voice said Cambridge--and America--should be burned down.
>
> "Take your violence to the hunky," the speech went on.
>
> "How can you steal from a thief? He done stole everything from us. He looted us from Africa."[1]

Chief Kinnamon testified that following his speech, Brown ". . . led a group of people to the main district of Cambridge, that's the business district. He instructed these people to shoot any patrolman, white or colored, who tried to stop them."[2] Kinnamon also testified that: "The street was full of guns seconds after the speech. . . . It was a well organized and well planned affair."[3] Life reports that Brown climbed on a car and yelled, "In a town this size, three men can burn it down."[4] When asked later if he had urged burning specific buildings, Brown responded: "Be serious, man. Do I have to tell black people what to burn?"[5]

After the Cambridge rioting, Brown was charged with inciting to riot. He was arrested by F.B.I. agents in Washington, D.C. While being led away he shouted: "We built this country and we'll burn it down."[6] Rap Brown was released by federal authorities almost immediately, but he was then arrested by police in Alexandria, Virginia, shortly after he had ". . . challenged Virginia officers to arrest him on a warrant for extradition to Maryland. He and his supporters threatened 'to make war right here just like in Detoit' if such a move were made."[1] There was some shoving, but no riot.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] "Newark: Post-riot Summit for Black Power," p. 28.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), July 27, 1967, p. 1.

While Rap Brown was making incendiary speeches in Newark, Cambridge and Alexandria, Stokely Carmichael was starting a six-month-long world tour. He traveled first to Great Britain where his speeches caused an uproar and led to calls for his expulsion on the grounds that he had "violated Britain's race relations act by inciting racial violence."[3] He was quoted as saying in Britain: "We are going to internationalize the black power struggle, we have discussed actions to take in this country."[4] Leaving Britain on July 24, Carmichael flew to Cuba on July 25, in time for Cuba's annual celebrations of the 26th of July.[5] Fidel Castro, Cuba's Premier, welcomed Carmichael, called him "the representative of the Negro people of the United States," and declared that the United States was faced by a "Negro rebellion."[6] Castro added that ". . . the aims of Negroes rioting in the United States are the 'same' as Communist revolutionaries in Latin America and Vietnam. . . ."[7] Stokely Carmichael responded to Castro's warm greeting with a barrage of statements hostile to the United States and its policies, foreign and domestic. In a broadcast on Havana Radio, Carmichael said that the only solution to problems faced by the American Negro "is the destruction of American imperialism which aids racial discrimination everywhere."[8] He added: "It is very clear what we have already decided to do as the only means to face oppression: take up arms."[1] The Cuban news agency, Prensa Latina, quoted Carmichael as saying that Negroes in America are organizing urban guerillas for ". . . a fight to the death."[2] Carmichael was also quoted as calling on Negro Americans to take up arms "from New York to California, from Canada to Mexico."[3] While in Cuba Carmichael once more defined "black power." Now it was ". . . unification of the Negro population to fight for their liberation. Take up arms!"[4] In addition to calling for armed rebellion in the United States, Carmichael apparently took sides between rival Communist parties and philosophies. He is reported to have declared in Havana that he was "a follower of Communist Chinese Party Chairman Mae Tse-tung and Cuban Premier Fidel Castro and /to have/ ridiculed the Communist Party, U.S.A., as 'the party of the rich.'"[5] During his Cuban visit Carmichael attended the Latin American Solidarity Conference as an "honorary delegate," and at that conference Fidel Castro warned the United States to keep "hands off" Carmichael and said that Carmichael would return to the United States "under my protection."[6]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., July 24, 1967, p. 2.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., July 27, 1967, p. 1.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., August 5, 1967, p. 16.

SNCC statements and actions in the United States paralleled the statements by Carmichael in Cuba. On August 16, 1967, SNCC released a statement attacking Zionism and accusing Israel of committing atrocities against Arabs. This line, paralleling the Communist line on the area, was likened by Whitney Young, Jr., head of the National Urban League, to the stand of the American Nazi Party.[7] On August 18, SNCC announced that

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., July 26, 1967, p. 1.

[3] Ibid., August 12, 1967, p. 6.

[4] Ibid., November 26, 1967, p. 4, sec. 1.

[5] Ibid., August 8, 1967, p. 5. [6] Ibid., August 12, 1967, p. 18.

[7] Ibid., August 17, 1967, p. 15.

Stokely Carmichael was due in Hanoi that day "to see the savage aggression and atrocities being carried out against that country by the United States."[1] The SNCC statement explained that: "By this visit to Southeast Asia, Mr. Carmichael joins the list of other black leaders, such as Mr. Floyd McKissick and Mr. Whitney Young, Jr., who have visited this area, America's testing ground for how it will try to crush wars of national liberation around the world, including the one developing in this country."[2] During the news conference at which this was announced, H. Rap Brown called on "all black people" to celebrate the anniversary of the start of the Watts riots as "Black Independence Day."[3] That same day Brown was arrested in New York by Internal Revenue Service agents for violating the National Firearms Act which makes it "unlawful for anyone under indictment to transport a firearm in interstate commerce."[4] Brown, according to the complaint filed against him, carried a semi-automatic carbine on a flight from New York to New Orleans and back on the return flight.[5] On Sunday, August 20, Brown issued a statement from jail that was quite different in spirit from the famous statement from a Birmingham jail issued by Martin Luther King in 1963. Brown insisted that he was being held a political prisoner, argued that his confinement would "not rebuild Detroit or save America from its due fate," and declared: "To all black brothers and sisters across America who are caught behind enemy lines: I say the fight has not yet matured. Arm yourselves for our freedom is yet to come."[6] He signed his statement: "Yours in Rebellion, H. Rap Brown."[7]

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[1] Ibid., August 19, 1967, p. 1. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid. Statement by Justice Department. [5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., August 21, 1967, p. 5. [7] Ibid.

Released on bond, Brown left jail and traveled to Detroit, scene of the worst rioting of the summer (forty-three people were killed). There he said: "The white man has declared war. We're in a rebellion." And, "stop looting and shart shooting."[1] He added: "Get yourself some guns. . . . The honky [white man] is your enemy. The brothers are now calling Detroit destroyed. You did a good job here."[2] The riot of five weeks before would "look like a picnic" when Negroes got guns and "take their due."[3] The Detroit riot, according to Brown, was "a war that was no accident."[4] The United States was trying to eliminate blacks by the war in Vietnam, starvation of Negro children in the South, birth control, and a discriminatory system of justice.[5]

> Within 20 years we will be just like the buffalo. . . . We're going to have to defend ourselves. The white man is not going to defend us.
>
> If you don't learn to control everything in your community it will be used by the mass as a weapon against you. America is planning to build concentration camps in this country to put Negroes in. There was a survey recently that said within 20 years only 20 per cent of the people in this country will have to work. These people will be operating machines that do the work . . . and who are they training to operate the machines? White people. Then they'll have a surplus of niggers to get rid of.[6]

Brown concluded by saying, in reference to a mock trial of police officers charged with brutality during the riots, "if the verdict is guilty, and I'm sure it will be, some brothers should be willing to execute the sentence."[7]

H. Rap Brown's version of "black power" paralleled Stokely Carmichael's. So did that of George Ware, an aide of Carmichael's who had who had accompanied him on his trip to Cuba but had returned to the United States when Carmichael went on to Hanoi. In Nashville, George Ware attacked Captain John Sorace of the Nashville Police Department who had testified against Carmichael and SNCC before the Senate Judiciary Committee headed by Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi. Sorace, Ware said, was "a white cracker, chief of intelligence, fascist, a white cracker from New York."[1] Eastland, he added, was a criminal who should be jailed and "executed for war crimes" against the people of Mississippi.[2] On the subject of leaders, Ware said: "If you kill off our leaders, we'll kill off yours. The Lyndon Johnsons, the Westmorelands . . . white people are going to start respecting us. . . . If they kill Stokely Carmichael, he /President Johnson/ had better stay in the White House, he'd better stay indoors."[3] Ware added that if Carmichael died it would be the work of the Central Intelligence Agency.[4] On the subject of rioting, Ware proclaimed that the Detroit riot was "very good for the cause of black people" and that blacks were fighting to control their communities.[5] He concluded: "We're going to control our communities or we're going to burn this country to the ground."[6]

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[1] _Ibid_., August 28, 1967, p. 27.

[2] _Memphis Press Scimitar_ (Tennessee), August 28, 1967, p. 11.

[3] _Ibid_. [4] _Ibid_.

[5] _Ibid_. [6] _Ibid_.

[7] _Commercial Appeal_ (Memphis, Tennessee), August 28, 1967, p. 27.

SNCC's attitude toward liberals, white and black, was expressed at the end of August by Ralph Featherstone, its program director, when he termed the appointment of Thurgood Marshall, former NAACP attorney who had argued and won so many civil rights cases before the United States Supreme Court, to that court as a "cynical political move" that would "further white supremacy and mislead blacks."[1] H. Rap Brown, chairman of SNCC, repeated a similar view at the National Conference of New Politics in Chicago when he ridiculed Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts, the Senate's only Negro.[2] SNCC was prominent at the "new politics" conference, leading the "black caucus" in taking control of that meeting. On Saturday, September 2, the "black caucus" had demanded and gotten 50 per cent membership on all committees.[3] On Sunday, September 3, James Forman, international affairs director of SNCC, took charge of an unscheduled and unauthorized business session and "without bothering with motions from the floor . . . Forman demanded and got a standing vote of endorsement of a proposed boycott of General Motors products because 'General Motors invests heavily in South Africa.'"[4] Forman's attitude toward democratic parliamentary procedure was revealed by his actions and statements. "When a woman delegate, who identified herself as Lee Zeldin, asked Forman for the floor, he refused to recognize her. The crowd shouted, 'Let her speak,' but Forman shouted, 'Yes, this is a dictatorship. I am a dictator.'"[5] About fifty whites walked out in protest, but Forman, cheered on by delegates from the "black caucus," rammed his resolutions through.[6] Forman told the assembled delegates that: "Only through the blood of the oppressors can the oppressed win their freedom," and he clarified the term "black power":

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[1] *Ibid*., August 22, 1967, p. 1.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] *Ibid*.

> In reality, there is black power now. I see that this cry of black people has gathered not only blacks around the United States but around the world.
>
> Black power is a threat to white power. People are not going to give up their power without a struggle. The organization that is going

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1. Memphis Press Scimitar (Tennessee), September 1, 1967, p. 2.

2. Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), September 4, 1967, p. 17.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

> to lose the most from the cry to organize black people--and there is no question about it--is the Democratic Party.
>
> Since 1932 Negroes have been voting the Democratic party to power. We've been in the hip pocket of the Democratic party too long.[1]

The Democratic party, party of a majority of the liberals of the nation, was one of the principle targets of the "black power" movement.

H. Rap Brown, praising the black domination of the conference, declared: "You have used your power."[2] He then proclaimed:

> There will never be a coalition with the hunkies. . . . Anything in the community you don't control is a weapon against you.
>
> Power is the word. Mao said, "Power comes from the mouth of a gun. . . ." You have to talk black nationalism whether you want to or not. I want the war to end in Vietnam, for a different reason. I want the brothers to come back here and fight the hunky.[3]

Brown told the "black caucus" to take up arms, if only "BB guns." The "BBs" should be poisoned, he added.[4]

Early in September Stokely Carmichael, who had already visited Britain, Cuba, and North Vietnam, was extended a formal invitation to visit Algeria, center of revolutionary activity in Northern Africa.[5] In the United States H. Rap Brown, Carmichael's successor, was jailed in Virginia for extradition to Maryland where he faced charges of inciting to riot. Brown made a point of reading, during the hours of legal maneuvering, The Thoughts of Chairman Mao.[6] Whatever his motives, Brown, by citing Mao's thoughts on power in Chicago and by ostentatiously reading his words in Virginia, gave ammunition to those who claimed SNCC was now dominated by Maoist revolutionaries. Stokely Carmichael's words and travels did the same. Much later in the year, in London, a number of members of the executive committees of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination, perhaps Britain's leading civil rights organization, walked out of the annual meeting. One of them, Anthony Lester, legal adviser to the group, explained the action by charging that the organization was being taken over by black power extremists.[1] "We fear there is a move now for a takeover by racialism, including the Trotskyites and Maoists."[2] One may doubt that a walkout by the moderates was the proper way to counter a threatened takeover by extremists of any sort in view of the record of such walkouts against Communist groups, but the die was cast. "Black power," as Stokely Carmichael had predicted, was being internationalized.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Memphis Press Scimitar (Tennessee), September 4, 1967, p. 17.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., September 6, 1967, p. 15.

[6] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), September 14, 1967, p. 46.

SNCC was born in 1960 as a group of students dedicated to the removal of racial discrimination by means of nonviolent direct action. Its goal was moderate: the integration of Negroes into American society as equals. By 1967 SNCC had become a subversive organization hostile to American policies, foreign and domestic, distrustful of the established institutions of government and society, calling for the overthrow of those institutions by armed guerilla warfare. SNCC had reached the point at which it distrusted any white American whatever his political opinions and it condemned those Negro leaders such as Thurgood Marshall who attempted to work within the framework of laws and institutions. Its leaders, Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown, identified the "black power" movement and the armed rioting with the "wars of national liberation," American foreign policy with international white supremacy, American intervention in Vietnam with imperialistic aggression, American capitalism with exploitation, American Negroes with a colonial people, and American police with an occupation force. The SNCC answer to all this was "black power," a term that increasingly came to mean black armed rebellion, though it was difficult to see how the professed goal--black control of black communities--could be established in that manner in a nation in which whites outnumber blacks ten to one and are, in addition, better armed and organized. "Black power" had apparently become a type of nihilism, though its advocates could certainly point to the strategic location of blacks in the heart of America's major cities and to the great difficulty of suppressing guerilla warfare. The future was still in doubt. SNCC leaders had used a rhetoric that called for armed rebellion, but there was no clear evidence that SNCC had any plans to actually organize systematic terror and guerilla warfare. Moreover, the SNCC organization had dwindled in size to perhaps fifty or a hundred paid organizers and was reputed to be in deep financial troubles by 1967.[1] In addition, Stokely Carmichael, with Charles Hamilton, published in August, 1967, a work, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America, that returned, in part, to the more moderate version of "black power," the version calling for black unity in order to make gains within the established framework of laws. Whether this was a belated publication of earlier views or a late turn to new and more moderate policies remained to be seen.

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[1] _Ibid_., December 4, 1967, p. 2. [2] _Ibid_.

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1. In May, 1967, Gordon Park reported that SNCC workers, then numbering about one hundred, were missing many paychecks and getting only twenty dollars a week when paid. "Whip of Black Power," p. 78. In June, 1967, Paul Good placed SNCC's membership at about fifty and noted that only a few SNCC offices remained open. Good, p. 48. In November, 1967, another estimate placed SNCC membership at no more than one hundred. Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), November 26, 1967, p. 4, sec. 1.

Chapter IV

BLACK POWER OR NONVIOLENCE?

CARMICHAEL AND HAMILTON VERSUS KING

By 1967 the Negro protest movement was seriously divided. The main cleavage was between the advocates of "black power," mainly CORE and SNCC workers among the major organizations, and the rest. The "black power" advocates, forming a separate group, differed from the rest of the civil rights movement in a number of ways. As a group it was, first, more radical in its outlook toward America. It saw white America's values and institutions as evil--racist, materialist, imperialist, oppressive. Indeed, its alienation from American society was so complete that it identified itself, not with that society, but with the "Third World" and the groups engaged in "Wars of National Liberation." Its immediate goal, then, was not integration into American society as equals, but relief from the oppression of that society by the formation of black unity and power; its eventual goal was a fundamental restructuring of American values and institutions. It was, then, a revolutionary body in American politics, at least in its aims. The revolutionary nature of its aims influenced its perception of proper tactics. Being revolutionary, it did not expect or desire any firm alliance with groups satisfied with the basic values and institutions of this nation. White liberals, then, were excluded as allies and black separatism was seen as a necessary immediate goal.

The rest of the civil rights movement, though dissatisfied with the rate of progress and desiring some basic restructuring of American society and values, had not given up hope for that society or loyalty to it. The goal remained full equality for the Negro community within the larger community--in a word, integration into the society though accompanied by some modifications of that society. This part of the Negro protest movement, the larger part, continued to work with whites and to seek white support. It remained reformist rather than revolutionary.

Differences remained, not only between "black power" groups and reformist groups, but between factions within each of those major groupings. Nevertheless, the fundamental differences were between the revolutionary "black power" groups and the moderate reformists. A summary of part of the argument and dialogue between the opposed groups follows.

The Argument for Black Power: Carmichael and Hamilton

Stokely Carmichael, father of the "black power" slogan, and Charles Hamilton, chairman of the Department of Political Science at Roosevelt University in Chicago, jointly published in the fall of 1967 an explanation and defense of "black power."[1] In that exposition they argued that "black power" represented ". . . the last reasonable opportunity for this society to work out its racial problems short of prolonged destructive guerilla warfare. That such violent warfare may be unavoidable is not herein denied."[1] In the preface to their work Carmichael and Hamilton argued that blacks must unite or face continued subjection to a white society that had no intention of voluntarily surrendering its superior position and authority. They added that their book provided no detailed program for action; rather, various means, including armed rebellion, might be used depending on the needs of the different communities and the policies deemed appropriate within them by the masses and their organizers.[2] Instead of specific proposals for action, Carmichael and Hamilton offered a broad framework or ideology of "black power" and a sense of peoplehood. This would not appeal to whites, they admitted, but the lives of black children were at stake, they argued, and to adopt the means and rate of progress favored by the oppressors would be ludicrous.[3] Earlier Dr. King had argued that submission to oppression was morally wrong because, in part, it allowed the oppressor to lull his consicence and even to remain unaware that he was an oppressor. Now Carmichael and Hamilton extended the logic of that argument and asserted that for blacks to make mild demands would be to mislead whites into thinking that the present path and change of pace was acceptable to the black masses.[4] In addition to their comments on the domestic scene, Carmichael and Hamilton included in the preface to their work the comment that while they were not going to deal at length with international affairs, "black power" meant identification of the liberation struggle in this nation with the liberation struggles around the world and with the "Third World."[5]

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[1] Carmichael and Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America.

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[1] *Ibid*., p. vii.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. vii-viii.

[3] *Ibid*., p. ix.

[4] *Ibid*., pp. ix-x.

[5] *Ibid*., pp. x-xi.

One of the major contentions of Carmichael and Hamilton is that blacks in this nation constitute an internal colony and it is not in the interest of the colonial power--white America--to liberate them.[1] Elaborating on this, Carmichael and Hamilton assert that blacks in America are systematically subordinated by both racist individuals and racist institutions and they are, in fact, confronted with a white power structure "as monolithic as Europe's colonial offices have been to African and Asian colonies."[2] To support the claim that blacks in this nation constitute an internal colony, Carmichael and Hamilton note that in America political decisions are made for blacks rather than by blacks when black interests are concerned. They argue that even when blacks hold political office in the major parties, it represents indirect rule by whites through co-opted blacks--a standard colonial device--rather than a true representation of the interests of blacks.[3] They mention William Dawson in Chicago[4] as an example of a co-opted black leader who comes to represent the white machine rather than the black populace and they argue that the process of co-optation leads to a small assimilated black elite and a large unaided black mass.

> This process of co-optation and a subsequent widening of the gap between the black elites and the masses is common under colonial rule. There has developed in this country an entire class of "captive leaders" in the black communities. These are black people with certain technical and administrative skills who could provide useful leadership roles in the black communities but do not because they have become beholden to the white power structure. These are black school teachers, county agents, junior executives in management positions with companies, etc.

Most black leaders are co-opted by whites and serve white interests rather than the interests of their own people, Carmichael and Hamilton argue, and they add that when blacks do threaten the political power of whites, whites will resort to any number of devices--gerrymandering and use of at-large districts, for example--to maintain power despite the rhetoric of democracy. They cite as examples the inability of blacks to assert meaningful control of the Borough of Manhattan despite a 60 per cent black population and the use by whites in Detroit of the at-large election scheme which prevented any black representation in this city until 1957 despite a vast black population.[1] Politically, then, Carmichael and Hamilton argue that American blacks constitute an internal colony confronted and suppressed by a white power structure that makes the decisions affecting them, that uses a small elite of white-designated and co-opted blacks to govern them, that resists fiercely any attempt by blacks to use their formal rights of citizenship to exert real political influence on decisions affecting them.

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[1] Ibid., p. 5.

[2] Ibid., p. 10

[3] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[4] Ibid., p. 10ff.

[5] Ibid., p. 13.

Economically too, Carmichael and Hamilton argue, black Americans serve as a colony to whites: the economic function of a colony is to enrich the colonizer; the economic function of black America is to enrich white America. Thus Carmichael and Hamilton argue that: "Exploiters come into the ghetto from outside, bleed it dry, and leave it economically dependent on the larger society;[2] thus they note that whites own most of the businesses and property in the black ghettos, taking the profits out of the ghetto."[3] But the parallel to colonialism extends, in their opinion, not only to the absentee landlords and businessmen, but also to the paternalistic welfare bureaucracies that purport to serve the ghetto:

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[1] Ibid., p. 16.

[2] Ibid., p. 17.

[3] Ibid., p. 18.

> Many of the social welfare agencies--public and private--frequently pretend to offer "uplift" services; in reality, they end up creating a system which dehumanizes the individual and perpetuates his dependency. Conscious or unconscious, the paternalistic attitude of many of these agencies is no different from that of many missionaries going into Africa.[1]

The reality, despite white professions of concern, is that "black communities are becoming more and more economically depressed."[2] To prove the point, Carmichael and Hamilton cite the following figures. Between 1958 and 1965 the percentage of unemployed black people between ages fourteen and nineteen went from 7.6 to 22.6 per cent.[3] For whites the figures were 8.3 and 11.8.[4] The unemployment rate for non-white adults was double that of whites in June, 1966--4.1 for whites and 8.3 for non-whites.[5] It might be concluded that the difference in employment rates was a function of educational preparation. It was not. Thus, "_unemployment rates in 1965 were higher for non-white high school graduates than for white high school dropouts_."[6] There was a similar finding in relation to earnings. Colored college graduates had a lower median income in 1960 than whites with only one to three years of high school.[7] A Negro with five or more years of college will not, on the average, earn as much as a white with a high school diploma.[8] The difference, Carmichael and Hamilton argue, is not educational preparation but racial discrimination.

The black community is exploited and poor, according to Carmichael and Hamilton. Such economic resources as it does possess are sapped by higher rent for housing.[9] In addition, blacks are discouraged from starting new businesses, just as they were in Africa, by the unavailability of loans and insurance, even from public funds set aside for that purpose. "The Small Business Administration, for example, in the ten-year period prior to 1964 made only seven loans to black people."[1] Blacks, then, are prevented from entering business and remain a source of cheap labor, a typical colonial pattern.[2] Carmichael and Hamilton conclude:

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[1] _Ibid_.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_., p. 19.

[4] _Ibid_.

[5] _Ibid_.

[6] _Ibid_.

[7] _Ibid_.

[8] _Ibid_., p. 20.

[9] _Ibid_., pp. 20-22.

> Black people are not in a depressed condition because of some defect in their character. The colonial power structure clamped a boot of oppression on the neck of the black people and then, ironically, said "they are not ready for freedom." Left solely to the good will of the oppressor, the oppressed would never be ready.[3]

In the opinion of Carmichael and Hamilton, blacks constitute an internal colony in America economically as well as politically. Thus blacks serve as a source of cheap labor and are discouraged from entering business and commerce; thus blacks are paid much less than whites for the same educational preparation; thus blacks are kept in a state of dependency and worsening employment by a paternalistic welfare structure; thus blacks pay higher prices, rents, and interest rates for equivalent or even poorer goods and housing.

Socially, Carmichael and Hamilton argue, white America has, in the pattern of a colonial power, relegated the colonized blacks to an inferior status in society. Blacks, for example, have fought and died for American freedom in past and present wars but they are still not treated as equals. The case of Woodrow Wilson is cited as an example of the white attitude. As President, he declared that America's purpose in entering World War I was to "make the world safe for democracy." Carmichael and Hamilton note that he also "issued executive orders segregating most of the eating and rest-room facilities for federal employees."[1] The period during and after the war for democracy was filled, in America, with race riots in the cities and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan to a position of great power in the North as well as the South.[2] In the first year after the war ten black soldiers, "some still in uniform," were lynched.[3] Carmichael and Hamilton argue that conditions were about the same in World War II. While increased need for manpower opened some jobs to Negroes, most were still at the bottom of the economic scale. They cite as evidence a statement attributed to the President of North American Aviation Company on May 7, 1941: "While we are in complete sympathy with the Negroes, it is against company policy to employ them as aircraft workers or mechanics . . . regardless of their training. . . . There will be some jobs as janitors for Negroes."[4] While the date of that statement makes it a dubious choice to prove discrimination during the war, Carmichael and Hamilton point out that German prisoners of war were treated more humanely than black American soldiers on occasion in the South. Specifically, they cite a case in which black American soldiers were guarding German prisoners being transported across the South by rail. In that case: "The railroad diner required the black American soldiers to eat in segregated facilities on the train--only four at a time and with considerable delay--while the German prisoners [white, of course] ate without delay and with other passengers in the main section of the diner."[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 22.

[2] Ibid., pp. 6, 22.

[3] Ibid., p. 23.

Carmichael and Hamilton argue that white discrimination has made self-respect for the black almost impossible. People, they argue, come to have the opinion of themselves that others have of them, and blacks, shown that they are despised from childhood on, come to believe in their own inferiority.[1] The only escape offered by whites is the same as that offered in some of the African colonies--the black must assimilate himself into the white society, adopting white standards, values and mores. The few who achieve this despite all obstacles are made marginal members of the white society; the others remain, exploited and suppressed.[2] Integration as it is now understood in this society, they argue, entails the black giving up his identity and becoming white, abandoning in the process all his cultural traditions, values and mores.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[2] Ibid., p. 26.

[3] Ibid., pp. 26-27.

[4] Ibid., p. 27.

[5] Ibid.

One of the problems confronting the black masses in this nation, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, is that whites have systematically excluded mention of black contributions and heritage from the schools, textbooks, movies, and the mass media. This exclusion, termed "cultural terrorism" by Carmichael and Hamilton, has deprived the black of a knowledge of his past and a pride in his race; it has, in fact, enabled the white to define the meaning of being black, to stigmatize the black as inferior, to justify the white's discrimination and oppression.[4] To remedy this, Carmichael and Hamilton argue that:

> Black people must redefine themselves, and only they can do that. Throughout this country, vast segments of the black communities are beginning to recognize the need to assert their own definitions, to reclaim their history, their culture; to create their own sense of community and togetherness. There is a growing resentment of the word "Negro," for example, because this term is the invention of our oppressor; it is his image of us that he describes. Many blacks are now calling themselves African-Americans, Afro-Americans or black people because that is our image of ourselves. When we begin to define our own

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[1] Ibid., p. 29.

[2] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

[3] Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[4] Ibid., pp. 34-39.

> image, the stereotypes--that is, lies--that our oppressor has developed will begin in the white community and end there. The black community will have a positive image of itself that it has created. This means we will no longer call ourselves lazy, apathetic, dumb, good-timers, shiftless, etc. Those are words used by white America to define us. If we accept these adjectives, as some of us have in the past, then we see ourselves only in a negative way, precisely the way white America wants us to see ourselves. Our incentive is broken and our will to fight is surrendered. From now on we shall view ourselves as African-Americans and as black people who are in fact energetic, determined, intelligent, beautiful and peace-loving.[1]

The first step toward the creation of "black power" is the creation of a black consciousness that is one of pride in the culture and achievements of blacks combined with a self-definition by blacks of what it means to be black. But what does it mean to be a black American? Carmichael and Hamilton cite approvingly the statement by John O. Killens in Black Man's Burden:

> I believe furthermore that the American Negro can be the bridge between the West and Africa-Asia. We black Americans can serve as a bridge to mutual understanding. The one thing we black Americans have in common with the other colored peoples of the world is that we have all felt the cruel and ruthless heel of white supremacy. We have all been "niggerized" on one level or another. And all of us are determined to "deniggerize" the earth. To rid the world of "niggers" is the Black Man's Burden, human reconstruction is the grand objective /p. 176/.[2]

Dr. King had argued that the peculiar contribution of the Negro to the modern world was the message of nonviolence, an alternative to the old cycle of hate and revenge leading to violence and wars. "Deniggerization" is the message and burden of the black according to Carmichael and Hamilton.

Once black consciousness has been achieved, the next step, political modernization, becomes possible. By this Carmichael and Hamilton mean: "(1) questioning old values and institutions of the society; (2) searching for new and different forms of political structure to solve political and economic problems; and (3) broadening the base of political participation to include more people in the decision-making process."[1] Dealing first with the values of American society, Carmichael and Hamilton argue:

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[1] Ibid., p. 37.

[2] Ibid., p. 39.

> The values of this society support a racist system; we find it incongruous to ask black people to adopt and support most of those values. We also reject the assumption that the basic institutions of this society must be preserved. The goal of black people must not be to assimilate into middle-class America, for that class--as a whole--is without a viable conscience as regards humanity. The values of the middle class permit the perpetuation of the ravages of the black community. The values of that class are based on material aggrandizement, not the expansion of humanity.[2]

Carmichael and Hamilton admit that some have spoken with favor of the utility of the middle class, but they retort that:

> . . . this same middle class manifests a sense of superior group position in regard to race. This class wants "good government" for themselves; it wants good schools for its children. At the same time, many of its members sneak into the black community by day, exploit it, and take the money home to their middle-class communities at night to support their operas and art galleries and comfortable homes. When not actually robbing, they will fight off the handful of more affluent black people who seek to move in; when they approve or even seek token integration, it applies only to black people like themselves--as "white" as possible. This class is the backbone of institutional racism in this country.[3]

The acceptance of racist middle-class institutions and values has been one of the basic flaws of the Negro protest movement, according to Carmichael and Hamilton.[4] That whole system of values and institutions is outdated, they argue, citing Walter Lipmann on the party system and mentioning, too, the city planning commissions, boards of education and police departments as other structures that, in their present form, do not meet black people's need.[5] Political modernization, they add, requires the creation of new structures and institutions that will meet those needs. The nature of these new structures and institutions is only suggested. One possibility mentioned is the creation of parallel institutions (presumably black-controlled), another is black control over schools in the black community.[1] In any case, the old structures and institutions are not to be considered sacred and new ones must be found that meet the needs of blacks.

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[1] Ibid., p. 39.

[2] Ibid., p. 40.

[3] Ibid., p. 41.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., pp. 42-43.

If the existing political structures of society are to be modernized, there must be broadened participation in politics by blacks. That must mean, not merely delivering black votes to white political machines, but black choice of black leaders responsible to blacks.[2] "People must no longer be tied, by small incentives or handouts, to a corrupting and corruptible white machine."[3] Blacks will become more active in politics, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, as they perceive that "the larger society is growing more affluent while the black society is retrogressing, as daily life and mounting statistics clearly show."[4] The newly active blacks will call the system into question and political modernization will have begun. Indeed, it has begun, for "black power" is one form of that process.[5]

"Black power," as a concept, "is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support these organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society."[6] In our pluralistic society, Carmichael and Hamilton argue, a group must achieve solidarity before it can bargain effectively. Therefore, "*before a group can enter the* open society, it must first close ranks." "Black power" suggests that blacks do just that. In supporting this approach, Carmichael and Hamilton note that traditionally the ethnic groups in this nation have advanced by exerting power gained by solidarity. The American melting pot has not melted, they argue: the Irish vote for Murphy over Goldberg; the Italians for Rubino over O'Brien. In foreign affairs the ethnic ties are equally important: the Marshall Plan was politically feasible because of the support of people of Western European extraction; foreign aid to India, Columbia and Tanganyika is more difficult because of the lack of voting blocs that identify with those nations.[1] They summarize the point:

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 43.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] *Ibid*., pp. 43-44.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 44.

[6] *Ibid*.

> Black Power recognizes--it must recognize--the ethnic basis of American politics as well as the power-oriented nature of American politics. Black Power therefore calls for black people to consolidate behind their own, so that they can bargain from a position of strength. But while we endorse the procedure of group solidarity and identity for the purpose of attaining certain goals in the body politic, this does not mean that black people should strive for the same kind of rewards /i.e., end results/ obtained by the white society. The ultimate values and goals are not domination or exploitation of other groups, but rather an effective share in the total power of the society.[2]

More concretely:

> Black Power means, for example, that in Lowndes County, Alabama, a black sheriff can end police brutality. A black tax assessor and tax collector and county board of revenue can lay, collect, and channel tax monies for the building of better roads and schools serving black people. In such areas as Lowndes, where black people have a majority, they will attempt to use power to exercise control. This is what they seek: control. When black people lack a majority, Black Power means proper representation and sharing of control. It means the creation of power bases, of strength, from which black people can press to change local or nation-wide patterns of oppression--instead of from weakness.[3]

"Black power," the call for "self-identification and self-determination," has been labeled "racist" by many. Carmichael and Hamilton retort that the charge is "a deliberate and absurd lie."[1] "Racism, they argue, "is not merely exclusion on the basis of race but exclusion for the purpose of subjugating or maintaining subjugation."[2] White racists have kept blacks down in this nation for over three hundred years; "black power" seeks only "full participation in the decision-making processes affecting the lives of black people, and recognition of the virtues in themselves as black people."[3] Blacks in this nation have not "lynched whites, bombed their churches, murdered their children and manipulated laws and institutions to maintain oppression. White racists have."[4] Opposition to black solidarity is itself a symptom of racism, if Carmichael and Hamilton are correct. "No other group would submit to being led by others. Italians do not run the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Irish do not chair Christopher Columbus Societies. Yet when black people call for black-run and all-black organizations, they are immediately classed in a category with the Ku Klux Klan."[5] Carmichael and Hamilton argue that "black power" is not racism, but they add that: ". . . we cannot and shall not offer any guarantees that Black Power, if achieved, would be non-racist. No one can predict human behavior. . . . The final truth is that white society is not entitled to reassurances, even if it were possible to offer them."[6]

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[1] Ibid., p. 45.

[2] Ibid., p. 47.

[3] Ibid., p. 46.

"Black power" represents a break from the theories and rhetoric of the civil rights movement. As Carmichael and Hamilton put it: "The language of yesterday is indeed irrelevant: progress, non-violence, integration, fear of 'white backlash,' coalition."[7] That language did not speak "to the growing militancy of young black people in the urban ghettos and the black-belt South."[1] It appealed, instead, to "an audience of middle-class whites."[2] It served as a buffer between those whites and the angry black community. That it did not represent the black community was proved by the inability of its spokesmen to "go into a rioting community and be listened to."[3] The users of that rhetoric, Dr. King, for example, were to blame--along with the mass media--for the rioting in Watts, Harlem, Chicago, and elsewhere:

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 47.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_.

[4] _Ibid_.

[5] _Ibid_., p. 49.

[6] _Ibid_.

[7] _Ibid_., p. 50.

> Each time the black people in those cities saw Dr. Martin Luther King get slapped they became angry. When they saw little black girls bombed to death in a church and civil rights workers ambushed and murdered, they were angrier; and when nothing happened, they were steaming mad. We had nothing to offer that they could see, except to go out and be beaten again. We helped to build their frustration.[4]

The language of love and suffering, responded to by the old language of patience and progress, produced almost nothing for the masses; in fact, in housing, employment and education, blacks fell farther behind.[5] Civil rights laws were passed, it is true, but they were "effectively nullified by deliberately weak enforcement."[6] "The white society devised the language, adopted the rules and had the black community narcotized into believing that that language and those rules were, in fact, relevant."[7] Blacks were told to follow "the Protestant Ethic of Work and Achievement."[8] "We were not told that it was by building Irish Power, Italian Power, Polish Power, or Jewish

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid. Dr. King admits that there is some truth in this analysis. Where Do We Go from Here, p. 45.

[5] Carmichael and Hamilton, pp. 50-51.

[6] Ibid., p. 51. [7] Ibid. [8] Ibid.

Power that those groups got themselves together and operated from positions of strength."[1]

A key word of the civil rights movement was nonviolence. But: "Those of us who advocate Black Power are quite clear in our minds that a 'non-violent' approach to civil rights is an approach black people cannot afford and white people to not deserve."[2] "From our viewpoint, rampaging white mobs and white night-riders must be made to understand that their days of free head-whipping are over. Black people should and must fight back."[3] "If a nation fails to protect its citizens, then that nation cannot condemn those who take up the task themselves."[4] Carmichael and Hamilton admit this language has frightened whites, but they argue that: "It is crystal clear to us--and it must become so with the white society--that there can be no social order without social justice. White people must be made to understand that they must stop messing with black people, or the blacks will fight back!"[5]

"Integration" was a second key word of the civil rights movement. Carmichael and Hamilton argue that the goal of integrating Negroes into the mainstream institutions of society rests on the idea--a fallacy--that: ". . . there is nothing of value in the black community and that little of value could be created among black people."[6] They add that the effect of integration as a goal is that: ". . . a few blacks 'make it,' leaving the black community, sapping it of leadership potential and know-how...... /These/ token Negroes--absorbed into a white mass--are of no value to the remaining black masses. They become meaningless show-pieces for a conscience-soothed white society."[7] Though these token Negroes will argue that they want only to be treated as individuals and that race is irrelevant, Carmichael and Hamilton insist that the few who succeed this way are wrong:

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*

> In the first place, black people have not suffered as individuals but as members of a group; therefore, their liberation lies in group action. This is why SNCC--and the concept of Black Power--affirms that helping individual black people to solve their problems on an individual basis does little to alleviate the mass of black people. Secondly, while color blindness may be a sound goal ultimately, we must realize that race is an overwhelming fact of life in this historical period. . . . To realize this and to attempt to deal with it does not make one a racist or overly preoccupied with race; it puts one in the forefront of a significant struggle. If there is no struggle today, there will be no meaningful results tomorrow.[1]

But integration is despicable as well as irrelevant, according to Carmichael and Hamilton.

> It is based on complete acceptance of the fact that in order to have a decent house or education, black people must move into a white neighborhood or send their children to a white school. This reinforces, among both black and white, the idea that "white" is automatically superior and "black" is by definition inferior. For this reason, "integration" is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy. It allows the nation to focus on a handful of Southern black children who get into white schools at a great price, and to ignore the ninety-four percent who are left in unimproved all-black schools. . . . The goal is not to take black children out of the black community and expose them to white middle-class values; the goal is to build and strengthen the black community.[2]

Integration as a goal is despicable not only because it implies that only by mixing with whites can blacks be helped, but also because it ". . . means that black people must give up their identity, deny their heritage."[3] "The fact is that integration, as traditionally articulated, would abolish the black community. The fact is that what must be abolished is not the black community, but the dependent colonial status that has been inflicted upon it."[1] Carmichael and Hamilton see the goal of integration as an attempt to make all blacks into imitations of white middle-class America. They argue, instead, that the "racial and cultural personality of the black community must be preserved and that community must win its freedom while preserving its cultural integrity."[2] Integration, then, is irrelevant because impossible and despicable because it entails sacrifice of black culture and identity.

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[1] Ibid., p. 54.

[2] Ibid., pp. 54-55.

[3] Ibid., p. 55.

The rhetoric of nonviolence and integration has been accomplished by warnings against the type of actions that would cause a "white backlash." Carmichael and Hamilton admit that: "Organization begets counterorganization," but they add that that is "no reason to defer."[3] In fact, they argue, "the so-called white backlash against black people is . . . the embedded traditions of institutional racism being brought into the open and calling forth overt manifestations of individual racism."[4] They cite the example of Cicero, Illinois, to illustrate their point.

> In the summer of 1966, when the protest marches into Cicero, Illinois, began, the black people knew they were not allowed to live in Cicero and the white people knew it. When blacks began to demand the right to live in homes in that town, the whites simply reminded them of the status quo. Some people called this "backlash." It was, in fact, racism defending itself. In the black community, this is called "White folks showing their color."[5]

Carmichael and Hamilton agree with Dr. King that the protest marches "were not the cause of the racism but merely exposed a long-term cancerous condition in the society" and they add that: "It is ludicrous to blame black people for what is simply an overt manifestation of white racism."[6] White backlash, in the opinion of Carmichael and Hamilton, is merely racism defending itself against attack, therefore the only way to avoid it is to avoid attacking racism, and that they will not accept.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 56.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

Racism must be attacked, but by what method? There is a rhetoric of coalition, advanced by Bayard Rustin for example, that calls for an alliance or coalition of blacks with liberal, labor and church groups and the left wing of the Democratic party. Carmichael and Hamilton, noting this approach, state that SNCC does not oppose coalition; indeed, they argue that the goal of "black power" is to establish the grounds on which political coalitions are viable.[1] They insist, however, that the proponents of coalition assume three basic fallacies: first, that the interests of blacks are identical with white liberal, labor and reform groups, or, put differently, that what is good for white America is automatically good for blacks; second, that it is possible to create a viable coalition between the politically and economically secure and the politically and economically insecure; and third, that political coalitions can be sustained on a moral or sentimental basis by appeals to conscience.[2] Each of these assumptions, or fallacies, is attacked by Carmichael and Hamilton.

One difficulty with the first assumption of the coalitionists--that black and white liberal interests are identical--is that white liberal groups at bottom accept the American system and desire only marginal reforms in it--but such reforms, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, cannot eliminate racism.[3] White Americans, they argue, have an overriding sense of superiority.[4] They live in white areas, send their children to white schools, move in white social circles. As a result, white liberals are unable to really understand or experience the plight of blacks and are unable to escape the pervasive racism of American society.[1] As Carmichael and Hamilton express it: ". . . no matter how 'liberal' a white person might be, he cannot ultimately escape the overpowering influence--on himself and on black people--of his whiteness in a racist society."[2] Indeed, these white liberals "neither look upon the blacks as co-equal partners nor do they perceive the goals as any but the adoption of certain Western norms and values."[3] This attitude is termed Anglo-conformity. Referring to it, Carmichael and Hamilton declare:

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 60. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*, p. 61. [4] *Ibid.*

> We do not believe it possible to form meaningful coalitions unless both or all parties are not only willing but believe it absolutely necessary to challenge Anglo-conformity and other prevailing norms and institutions. Most liberal groups with which we are familiar are not so willing at this time. If that is the case, then the coalition is doomed to frustration and failure.[4]

The allies of the "black power" advocates must be revolutionists, not reformers, and their orientation must be non-Western and, more specifically, non-English. Those conditions do indeed eliminate most liberals as potential allies.

The Anglo-conformists assume, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, that what is good for whites is also good for blacks.[5] Carmichael and Hamilton reject this and argue that: ". . . the political and social rights of black people have been and always will be negotiable and expendable the moment they conflict with the interest of their 'allies.'"[6] To support their argument, Carmichael and Hamilton cite the operation of Mayor Daley's Democratic machine in Chicago as one example of a coalition depending on black support that sacrifices black interests to machine interests.[7] Next they cite organized labor as an "example of a potential ally who has never deemed it essential to question the society's basic values and institutions."[1] The values and institutions specifically mentioned, hence presumably the ones that prevent an alliance of labor and blacks, are capitalism and racism.[2] Finally they cite liberal-reform groups and exclude them as allies on several grounds. For one: "They establish their own goals and then demand that black people identify with them. When black leaders begin to articulate goals in the interest of black people _first_, the reformers tend, more often than not, to term this 'racist' and to drop off."[3] Not only that, but the reforms these groups seek do not help blacks.

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[1] *Ibid*., pp. 61-62.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 61.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 62.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] *Ibid*., pp. 62-63.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 63.

> Reformers generally reject the political practice of ticket balancing, which means that they tend to be "color blind" and wish to select candidates only on the basis of qualifications, or merit. In itself, this would not be bad, but their conception of a "qualified" person is usually one who fits the white middle-class mold. Seldom, if ever, does one hear of the reformers advocating representation by grass-roots leaders from the ghettos: these are hardly "blue-ribbon" types. Again, when reformers push for elections at large as opposed to election by district, they do not increase black political power. "Blue-ribbon" candidates, government by technical experts, elections at large--all these common innovations of reformers do little for black people.[4]

A final objection to coalition with reform groups is that: ". . . although those groups were usually strong on civil rights, they were nonetheless essentially middle-class oriented. This could only perpetuate a paternalistic, colonial relationship--doing _for_ the blacks."[5] Carmichael and Hamilton sum up their rejection of the first fallacy of coalition as follows:

> . . . the political and economic institutions of this society must be completely revised if the political and economic status of black people is to be improved. We do not see how black people can form effective coalitions with groups which are not willing to question and condemn the racist institutions which exploit black people; which do not

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[1] _Ibid_.
[2] _Ibid_., p. 64.
[3] _Ibid_., pp. 64-65.
[4] _Ibid_., p. 65.
[5] _Ibid_.

> perceive the need for, and will not work for, basic change. Black people cannot afford to assume that what is good for white America is automatically good for black people.[1]

The second fallacy of those who advocate coalition, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, is that the politically and economically insecure can ally themselves with the politically and economically secure. Those who advocate such a coalition often cite the Populist coalition of blacks and whites at the end of the last century. Carmichael and Hamilton, however, cite some evidence that the white part of the coalition never did work to protect the black part; that in some states, Southern Carolina and Georgia, for example, white Populists race-baited blacks or fused with the lily-white wing of the Republican party; and that Tom Watson, one of the early leaders of the black-white coalition, completely changed his views when it became politically expedient and ended a bitter political enemy of blacks, seeking even to remove the ballot from them altogether.[2] They conclude of the Populist coalition:

> At all times, the Populists and Watson emerge as politically motivated. The history of the period tells us that the whites--whether Populists, Republicans or Democrats--always had their own interests in mind. The black man was little more than a political football, to be tossed and kicked around at the convenience of others whose position was more secure.[3]

Carmichael and Hamilton insist that the coalitional politics of Atlanta, Georgia, today teaches the same lesson. There, they argue, a widely praised coalition of blacks with white business and professional people and the mass media has operated for the benefit of the whites, but not the blacks.[4] To support their contention Carmichael and Hamilton cite, first, Edward Banfield in Big City Politics on the policies of one of the major business groups that is a part of the coalition: "*The Uptown Association is a vehicle used by banks and other property owners to maintain a boundary line against expansion of the Negro district. To achieve this purpose it supports nonresidential urban renewal projects* [pp. 31-32, author's italics]."[1] They cite Banfield again on the fruits of the coalition: "Hartsfield [long-time mayor of Atlanta] gave the Negro practically nothing in return for his vote."[2] In addition to Banfield's testimony, Carmichael and Hamilton note that in 1963 black civic leaders compiled a long list of injustices including: ". . . faults in the sewerage system, sidewalks needed, streets which should be paved, deficient bus service and traffic control, substandard housing areas, inadequate parks and recreation facilities, continuing school segregation and inadequate black schools."[3] They note also that in 1962 "the city employed 5,663 workers, 1,647 of them black but only 200 of those did other than menial work."[4] Carmichael and Hamilton conclude: "Black people must ultimately come to realize that such coalitions, such alliances have not been in their interest. They are 'allying' with forces clearly not consistent with the long-term progress of blacks; in fact, the whites enter the alliance in many cases precisely to impede that progress."[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 66. [2] Ibid., pp. 67-69.

[3] Ibid., pp. 69-70. [4] Ibid., pp. 70ff.

A third illustration of the "treacherous nature of coalitions between the economically secure and insecure" is provided, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, by organized labor.[6] Labor unions, they argue, have consolidated their position since passage of the Wagner Act in 1935, but the status of the blacks:

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 71.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 72.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] *Ibid*.

> . . . has been one of steady deterioration rather than progress. It is common knowledge that the craft unions of AFL (printers, plumbers, bricklayers, electrical workers) have deliberately excluded black workers over the years. These unions have taken care of their own--their white own. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate of black workers has increased.[1]

In some cases, Carmichael and Hamilton cite three, unions have not only excluded blacks from the union but they have also caused already employed blacks to lose their jobs.[2] Carmichael and Hamilton note also that black workers in the AFL-CIO, led by A. Philip Randolph, felt compelled to organize the Negro American Labor Council in 1959: that the AFL-CIO did not welcome formation of this group; that Randolph told an NAACP convention in 1960 that the misunderstanding between the black community and labor was widening.[3] In terms of their international effect, Carmichael and Hamilton argue that:

> . . . the craft unions of the AFL were born and consolidating their positions at the same time that this country was beginning to expand imperialistically in Latin America and in the Philippines. Such expansion increased the economic security of white union workers here. Thus organized labor has participated in the exploitation of colored peoples abroad and of black workers at home.[4]

Carmichael and Hamilton believe that the problem of exploitation of colored workers will continue here and abroad and they ask rhetorically with whom organized labor in this nation will stand. They imply heavily that it is bound to side with "the big businesses of exploitation" rather than the "insecure poor colored peoples," and they conclude: "We cannot see, then, how black people, who are massively insecure both politically and economically, can coalesce with those whose position is secure--particularly when the latter's security is based on the perpetuation of the existing political and economic structure."[5]

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1. *Ibid*., p. 73.
2. *Ibid*.
3. *Ibid*., pp. 73-74.
4. *Ibid*., p. 75.
5. *Ibid*.

The third fallacy of those who advocate coalition with whites now, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, is that such coalitions can be founded on morality and friendship.[1] The SNCC view, they add, is that political relations are based on self-interest, mainly material self-interest, and that moral sentiments will not weather a conflict of interests.[2] In defending this position Carmichael and Hamilton admit that moral pressure played a role in passage of the 1964 and 1965 civil rights acts, but they insist that the significance of this is overrated.[3] They argue, first, that moral pressure did not force the effective implementation of the acts (thereby rendering them meaningless) and, second, that the moral pressure disappeared when the North's interests were threatened by bills that would open housing and provide fair employment.[4] Carmichael and Hamilton reject, too, the idea that white America is torn between the American Creed and American practices. They note that the Constitution itself in Article One treated the Negro as three-fifths of a person and they conclude that the rhetoric of equality was never meant to apply to American blacks.[5] Carmichael and Hamilton assert that:

> . . . in a profit-oriented, materialistic society, there is little time to reflect on creeds, especially if it could mean more job competition, "lower property values," and the "daughter marrying a Negro." There is no "American dilemma," no moral hang-up, and black people should not base decisions on the assumption that a dilemma exists. It may be useful to articulate such assumptions in order to embarrass, to create international pressure, to educate. But they cannot form the basis for viable coalitions.[6]

Having argued that the interests of white liberals and blacks are not the same, that the politically and economically insecure cannot ally themselves with the secure, and that alliances based on moral sentiments will fail, Carmichael and Hamilton then lay down the pre-conditions of viable coalitions:

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 76.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 77.

[6] *Ibid*., pp. 79-80.

> . . . (a) the recognition by the parties involved of their respective self-interests; (b) the mutual belief that each party stands to benefit in terms of that self-interest from allying with the other or others; (c) the acceptance of the fact that each party has its own independent base of power and does not depend for ultimate decision-making on a force outside itself; and (d) the realization that the coalition deals with specific and identifiable--as opposed to general and vague--goals.[1]

Carmichael and Hamilton conclude: "Black Power therefore has no connotation of 'go it alone.' Black Power simply says: enter coalitions only after you are able to 'stand on your own.'"[2]

There are roles for whites to play even before blacks are sufficiently organized and independent to allow real coalitions between the two communities. Education of their fellow whites is one such role, according to Carmichael and Hamilton. Whites, they argue, should go into the white communities where the racism originates and work to get rid of it.[3] They should tell whites, not blacks, to be nonviolent, and they should teach whites the need for "black power."[4] They should, in addition, reorient society toward Africa and Asia and work to eliminate "Anglo-conformity."[5] Organization is a second role for sympathetic whites. Such people should work to create a bloc of poor whites dedicated to an open, nonracist, society.[6] The eventual goal of such organization is a coalition of poor whites with poor blacks, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, but they admit that such a coalition is impossible now and they add that poor whites are at present becoming more, not less, hostile to blacks, in part because the white poor see people and attention going to blacks, not themselves.[1] Whites with special skills, such as lawyers, can now perform a third role--supporting black efforts led by blacks. These whites, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, will not lead or make policy, but they can provide needed skills in a subordinate position.[2] Whites, then, have roles to play, but those roles are in the white communities--education and organization--or in supportive positions under black guidance when working with blacks.

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 81.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 82.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] *Ibid*.

In the first three chapters of Black Power Carmichael and Hamilton argued that blacks constitute an internal colony in America, that independent black power is a requisite for black progress, and that the assumptions and rhetoric of the civil rights movement--particularly its faith in coalition and co-operation with whites--are based on fallacies. In the next three chapters Carmichael and Hamilton elaborate on the need for and substance of "black power" by detailing the experience of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO or Black Panther Party) and the blacks of Tuskegee, Alabama. The first of these chapters provides strong support for their earlier arguments; the next two, oddly, do much to refute them.

In chapter four, "Mississippi Freedom Democrats: Bankruptcy of the Establishment," Carmichael and Hamilton recount the treachery of the liberals at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in failing to support the MFDP candidates rather than the racist white regulars and they tell again the experience of the MFDP in Congress in 1965 when its challenge to the racist Mississippi delegation in the House was defeated on legalistic grounds, astoundingly, despite the clear illegality of the Mississippi electoral process at that time. The actions in the convention and in Congress proved, to Carmichael and Hamilton's satisfaction, that whites are unreliable allies, that the national conscience is undependable, that law is a matter of might, not right, and is merely a tool of those with political power, and that the trust of Mississippi's blacks in the just action of the nation was as naive and misplaced as the Russian peasant's simple faith in the Tsar.[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 83.

[2] Ibid.

The failure of white liberals to support the MFDP at the 1964 Democratic National Convention and in the United States House of Representatives in 1965 led SNCC, MFDP's main component, to seek alternatives to reliance on white allies and the white conscience. The path it chose--black separatism and independent black political power--was given its first test in Lowndes County, Alabama, in 1965 and 1966. When SNCC entered Lowndes in March and April, 1965, not one black was registered to vote even though blacks constituted 81 per cent of the population.[2] By August, five months later, only about fifty or sixty blacks--an insignificant number politically--had successfully registered.[3] Then the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed and federal registrars came to Lowndes.[4] Terror and coercion continued, but hundreds of blacks, no longer hindered by "literacy tests or absurdly difficult questions about the Constitution or such tactics as rejection because one "t" was not properly crossed or an "i" inadequately dotted swelled the voting rolls."[5] In another fifteen months 3,900 blacks had registered.[6] To utilize this voting strength a separate black political party, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, was formed on the basis of an unusual Alabama law that allowed organization of a political party on a county-wide basis.[1] The new LCFO party nominated a slate of candidates and directed its efforts toward the election of November 6, 1966.[2] When that election came not a single black candidate won despite a registration edge over the whites.[3] Carmichael and Hamilton explain the result:

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[1] *Ibid*., pp. 95-96.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 98, 100.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 104.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] *Ibid*.

> What had happened was simple and predictable. During the first few months after August, 1965, when the federal registrars came into the county, the "independent blacks" had flocked down by the hundreds, anxious to register and to vote for a change. But then the plantation owners began to herd in "their niggers" and to register them. When election day came, the whites could be fairly confident that they had a certain portion of the black vote tied up. This undoubtedly is the case across the Southland.[4]

Carmichael and Hamilton argue that by increased voter education and political organization, combined with some type of party-directed patronage to protect blacks from economic intimidation, the remaining 51 per cent of blacks still unregistered could be brought to register and provide the winning margin for blacks.[5] They conclude: ". . . some day black people will control the government of Lowndes County."[6]

Perhaps they will, but what lessons can be derived from the Carmichael and Hamilton discussion? Three, at least, are apparent. First, SNCC's registration drive, acting alone, produced an insignificant number of black voters despite a major effort over a five-month period. In other words, SNCC's registration drive in Lowndes was failing to produce black political power just as SNCC's registration efforts over the previous three years had failed to produce significant black political power anywhere in the Deep South. Black separatism did not produce black power. Second, politically significant numbers of blacks were registered in Lowndes only after the voting rights bill became law and federal registrars came to the county. In Lowndes, then, the creation of black political power was made possible only by the intervention of a government dominated by whites and labeled by Carmichael and Hamilton as a white racist colonial power. Without that intervention there would have been no black political power in Lowndes; with it black political power was made possible not only in the few counties such as Lowndes where SNCC had made major (and unsuccessful) efforts, but in hundreds of counties all over the South. The creation of black power required the co-operation of whites. Third, even the creation of an all-black political party on a county-wide basis depended on a white-dominated state government: initially in having an unusual law allowing formation of county-wide political parties; subsequently in retaining it despite its use by blacks. There were, then, three factors leading to the development of black political power in Lowndes--outside stimulation by SNCC, the voting rights act, and an unusual state law. Two of the three, the voting rights act and the state law, were dependent on white co-operation or indifference and were, therefore, completely beyond the power of blacks acting alone. In sum, the Lowndes experience, the primary example of "black power" given by Carmichael and Hamilton, indicates that completely independent black political power in this nation is a myth.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 106. [2] _Ibid_., p. 109. [3] _Ibid_., p. 118.

[4] _Ibid_., pp. 118-119. [5] _Ibid_., pp. 119-120. [6] _Ibid_., p. 120.

In chapter six Carmichael and Hamilton sketch the political history of Tuskagee, Alabama, which they describe as "undoubtedly one of the most significant areas in the history of the black man in this country."[1] Tuskegee is known, they state, as the home of Booker T. Washington, from 1881 to his death in 1915, and of Tuskegee Institute, which he founded in 1881.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 122.

[2] Ibid.

Tuskegee was also the home of Dr. George Washington Carver and the site of an all-black-staffed Veterans' Administration Hospital founded in 1924.[1] In 1958 Tuskegee became the first city investigated by the newly founded United States Commission on Civil Rights.[2] Tuskegee, Carmichael and Hamilton add, is located in Macon County and has had a black population majority of about 84 per cent since the last century.[3] This black majority possessed the vote from the end of the Civil War until 1901 when the state legislature amended the state constitution in such a manner that most blacks lost the vote.[4] According to Carmichael and Hamilton:

> This chapter will describe the long, hard, successful fight waged by some in the county to regain the ballot--to regain the previous status of broadened participation in politics--and the manner in which this regained participation has been exercised. It has been exercised with "restraint," that is, the black leaders have not utilized their new positions to exercise effective political power. The black leaders have pursued what we call a "politics of deference." Many people there, and throughout the country, have looked on Tuskegee as a "model" of "bi-racial" government--blacks and whites working and governing together. We reject that conclusion. We see the present-day Tuskegee situation as perpetuating a racially deferential society, and we suggest that a politics of Black Power, as defined in this book, would be far healthier for the community. We suggest that Tuskegee could become a better model--North and South--for those numerous electoral districts where black people have a commanding majority.[5]

This chapter deals, then, with the method by which black voting power was regained and the manner in which it has been exercised. Most of the chapter is devoted to the former.

Carmichael and Hamilton begin their analysis by noting that Booker T. Washington, long regarded as the foremost black leader in the nation, advocated a policy of black accommodation to whites. In this philosophy political activity by blacks was de-emphasized in favor of development of black educational and economic potential.[1] The assumption underlying this philosophy, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, was that blacks had to prove themselves "worthy" to whites and, once this had been accomplished, whites would "reward" blacks by including them in the political process.[2] Carmichael and Hamilton attack the Booker T. Washington philosophy by noting, first, that the creation of Tuskegee Institute (which became the base for Booker T. Washington) was itself the result of blacks using their voting strength as a bargaining weapon. In 1880 black Republicans of Macon County supported a white ex-Confederate Colonel, a Democrat, for the state legislature in return for his promise to work for creation of the Institute. Both sides fulfilled their part of the bargain.[3] As Carmichael and Hamilton describe it:

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[1] Ibid., p. 123.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 123-124.

[5] Ibid., p. 124.

> Thus the black people of Tuskagee used the ballot effectively to gain their goals. They were not begging, relying on sentiment or morality; they traded their votes for a specific and meaningful reward. If Foster /the Colonel/ had not kept his part of the bargain, they could have "punished" him with their political power at the next election. . . . Foster respected their Black Power. This historical fact seems to have been forgotten by many people today who counsel black people to follow the teachings of Washington in regard to mitigating political activity. . . . If Mr. Adams and the black people had not acted politically, Washington might never have acquired the influence he did.[4]

Even Booker T. Washington's own position, then, depended on the use of the black voting power he was willing, temporarily, to give up.

The second fallacy in Washington's philosophy, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, was the faith that blacks, once they had proved their worth, would be rewarded with the ballot.

> The fact is that Washington overestimated the "good will" and "good faith" of white America. The blacks of Tuskegee, for the most part, did follow the teachings of the Institute's founder. They did not concentrate

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

[4] *Ibid.*

> on politics; they did concentrate on acquiring skills, on building an economically secure life. But they were not "rewarded" with political participation.[1]

Instead of challenging the whites' lack of faith, the blacks of Tuskegee "built fine homes and went about their business at the college or the hospital without challenging the political control of the sixteen per cent white population."[2] Finally, in the late thirties, a small group of blacks organized the Tuskegee Men's Club (later the Tuskegee Civic Association or TCA) and attempted to register blacks to vote.[3] Against incredible obstacles, the group made slow progress: ". . . in 1940, there were approximately 29 registered black voters, 115 in 1946, 514 in 1950, and 855 in 1954."[4] Part of the Civic Association's difficulty in registering blacks was the tacit understanding between whites and "Institute or hospital Negroes" that in exchange for being left alone the blacks would not threaten white political power.[5]

In spite of white obstruction and black indifference, blacks were approaching a majority of registered voters by the mid-fifties. The Alabama state legislature reacted by gerrymandering the four-sided city of Tuskegee into a twenty-eight-sided city including only ten of an original 430 black voters. No whites were excluded.[6] "This was Alabama's answer to the teachings of 'political patience' of Booker T. Washington."[7] Negroes in Tuskegee retaliated with a selective-buying campaign that lasted about four years and closed down twenty-six white businesses.[8] Carmichael and Hamilton assess the boycott tactic as follows:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 126-127.
[2] Ibid., p. 127.
[3] Ibid., p. 128.
[4] Ibid., p. 129.
[5] Ibid., pp. 129-130.
[6] Ibid., p. 133.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

> The black people of Tuskegee had economic independence from local whites and they used it. But their political power did not increase. Apparently, the whites were willing to suffer economic disaster rather than concede political power to the blacks. (The city boundaries were not restored until 1961, and then as a result of legal action culminating in a federal court decision of 1961 which ruled that the gerrymander had been racially motivated in violation of the Fifteenth Amendment and that a state may not gerrymander municipal boundaries on the basis of race. The former boundaries were restored.)[1]

Carmichael and Hamilton conclude:

> The blacks had achieved education and economic security--both of which are still projected throughout the nation as cure-alls--but the whites continued to lay and collect taxes, rule over the school system, determine law enforcement practices. The reason is obvious enough: blacks did not have political power. Economic security or the promise of it may, as we noted in Chapter V, be vital to the building of a strong political force. But in a vacuum it is of no use to black people working for meaningful change.[2]

The key to meaningful change is political power.

In 1958 the United States Civil Rights Commission investigated the situation in Tuskegee and:

> In 1959, Macon County became one of the first counties against which the Department of Justice filed a suit charging voting denials. Slowly, tediously, with one judicial decree after another handed down by federal Judge Frank M. Johnson, sitting in Montgomery, black people were added to the rolls. Soon the number of blacks exceeded whites as voters by a substantial margin.[3]

Black political power in Macon County had been regained. (Black voters had a slight registration edge by 1964; by 1966 that margin was substantial.)[4]

Having regained a voting majority, blacks in Tuskegee were faced with a decision on the proper use of that power. The TCA, which had led the fight to regain black voting rights, was true to its earlier pledges and called for blacks to operate within the Democratic party, leaving some positions--a majority initially--to whites.[5] This approach, which carefully abstained from a black versus white division, was opposed by a new black group, the Non-Partisan Voters' League, that argued for a black majority in the City Council and black control of important county positions. The TCA view prevailed, the national press praised Tuskegee blacks for refusing to replace "white oligarchy" with "black oligarchy," and black dissatisfactions emerged.[1] Some blacks became unhappy with the conduct of the two black members that had been elected to the five member City Council on the grounds that the two were not speaking out sufficiently on the subject of racial discrimination. Carmichael and Hamilton comment that: "The pitiful thing is that the black community had not needed to settle for representatives who could only 'speak out'; it could have had political control."[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 133-34.

[2] Ibid., p. 134.

[3] Ibid., p. 136.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

By 1966, Carmichael and Hamilton note, black dissatisfaction with racial progress in Tuskegee took a new turn and students at the Institute:

> . . . tried to enter "white" restaurants (and had been refused), held rallies, picketed stores for not hiring black people. Several times they tried to attend the segregated white churches, and were brutally beaten twice. Then, in January of 1966, one of the student leaders--Sammy Younge, Jr.--was shot to death by a white man when he sought to use the "white" rest-room at a gas station. (The man was later acquitted by an all-white jury in another county.) Younge himself was a member of a respected middle-class family in the town; his murder (not to mention the beatings at the churches) should have made clear to the black middle-class the folly and hoplessness of their previous approach.[3]

Younge's death led to student "protest demonstrations in the town, and there was some damage to property as a result of the demonstrators being harassed and intimidated by local police."[4] "Vocal black people," Carmichael and Hamilton add, "condemned the students rather than the conditions which permitted Younge to die."[5] Carmichael and Hamilton cite, as typical of the attitude of the black middle-class in Tuskegee, a letter by a Negro lady that condemns the "SNCC-type" and others "who are persuaded to act outside the law."[1] The lady states in her letter that "I believe in the American dream--the Christian principle--of democracy for all regardless of race, color or creed" and she insists that: "We want a type of relationship, built on solid ground, which will endure through the years--a relationship depending upon mutual trust and respect."[2] Carmichael and Hamilton condemn the attitude of this lady and others of her views by saying:

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 138.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 139.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 140.

[5] *Ibid*.

> [They] soothe themselves into thinking that they are describing what is or can be. They are simply deceiving themselves. Their grand language--applauded by many whites--may make them feel morally superior but *it does nothing to gain political power, the power necessary to stop killings and discrimination*. Black people of Tuskegee do not need to show whites that they can talk a good rhetoric. White people know that power is not love, Christian charity, etc. If these things come, let them develop out of a respect for mutual power. The whites will stop killing blacks and kidding blacks when the blacks make it no longer worthwhile for them to do so.[3] [Emphasis added.]

The one thing that will stop killings and discriminations is black political power, according to Carmichael and Hamilton, and the American dream, believed in by most of the black middle class in Tuskegee, does nothing to produce that power.

In conclusion, Carmichael and Hamilton argue that Tuskegee: ". . . could be the model of Black Power. It could be the place where black people have amassed political power and used that power effectively."[4] While admitting that it is "naive to expect that the operation of Black Power in Tuskegee could transform Alabama state politics" and that "no widespread possibility of governing whole counties exists in the North at this

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1. *Ibid*., p. 141.
2. *Ibid*., pp. 140-141.
3. *Ibid*., p. 143.
4. *Ibid*., p. 144.

time," Carmichael and Hamilton insist that Tuskegee could serve as an example for the black ghettos and "as an example of what civilized government could be in this society."[1] Or, as Carmichael and Hamilton rephrase it, "Pockets of Black Power could develop and become illustrations of what legitimate government really is."[2]

The argument of the chapter on Tuskegee is that political power is the key to black progress and that reliance on the American Dream, love, and co-operation with whites won't provide that power. Yet the remarkable thing about the Carmichael and Hamilton exposition is that it makes it abundantly clear that at every step in time black voting power in Tuskegee depended on white co-operation and intervention. Initially, though Carmichael and Hamilton ignore the point, black voting rights were established in Tuskegee by the political decisions of a white President and Congress and by the force of predominantly white armies, not by black separatism or black revolt. Once that white support was withdrawn, blacks in Tuskegee lost their voting rights despite their numerical majority and economic strength (demonstrating that pockets of black political power cannot be maintained without white co-operation). When blacks, acting alone, finally approached a registration majority again in 1957, whites effectively intervened on the state level and destroyed that near majority by gerrymandering the city. Blacks retaliated for the gerrymander by imposing an effective economic boycott, but, as Carmichael and Hamilton point out, black economic strength failed to restore black voting rights. Instead, blacks regained those rights by an appeal to the laws and courts that Carmichael and Hamilton had scorned. Put bluntly, black voting strength was finally restored in Tuskegee by the intervention of white political power. Initially, there was an investigation by a predominantly white commission appointed by a white President and created by an almost entirely white Congress. This was followed by injunctions preventing further white obstruction from a white judge applying white-made law and, later, by a voting rights act passed by a white-dominated Congress. In sum, nothing in the chapter supports the thesis that blacks, acting alone and without white allies, can gain or maintain political power in a nation that is overwhelmingly white; not even, as the case of Tuskegee shows, when the blacks are economically secure and possess a local majority of the population. The same events, incidentally, refute the conclusion that all whites, white-dominated governments and white-dominated institutions can be grouped together and dismissed as colonial in their attitudes and actions toward blacks. Blacks got, and regained, their voting power by co-operating with some whites against others and by utilizing to the full white-dominated courts, laws, and commissions. Carmichael and Hamilton are persuasive in arguing that blacks need political power, but their account makes it clear that black political power can be neither gained nor retained without the co-operation of whites and the utilization of white-dominated institutions. In Tuskegee, as in Lowndes, black effort alone was not enough to establish (or retain) black political power.

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[1] Ibid., p. 145.

[2] Ibid.

The second major theme of the chapter was the proper exercise of power once it had been regained. Carmichael and Hamilton argue that the black attempt to co-operate with the local whites was futile and, as they describe that attempt, it was. But to conclude from this, as Carmichael and Hamilton appear to, that all co-operation with whites is futile and that the American Dream is a sham is to ignore how blacks in Tuskegee regained their political power and to confuse the actions and attitudes of some whites with the actions and attitudes of all whites (such an attitude toward blacks is called racism). Nor is it clear that the attempt of blacks in Tuskegee to co-operate with local whites was wasted. By making the attempt to co-operate they may have changed some local attitudes and they provided no ammunition to those who made and make dire prophecies of the effect of a black voting majority. By seeking bi-racial co-operation they may even have provided an example of the attitudes required by that civilized and legitimate government of which Carmichael and Hamilton spoke. Certainly the black attempt at co-operation with local whites did nothing to reduce the support of the national government on which black voting rights in Tuskegee ultimately rest; neither did it remove the possibility of getting effective black control at the next election should co-operation prove a failure. Still, there remains an ambiguity: if the blacks of Tuskegee had used their voting strength to impose, immediately, effective black control of the government, the need for the protests that led to the death of Sammy Younge, Jr., might have been reduced or eliminated; on the other hand, the possibility remains that an immediate black takeover would have led to greater conflict and more deaths. In the end, then, the decision of Tuskegee's blacks to attempt co-operation with the local whites is debatable; the decision, properly, was their own.

In _Black Power_, Carmichael and Hamilton state that black citizens in America constitute an internal colony of the whites; that whites, of all persuasions, are tainted by racism; that the basic values of the society, materialism and racism, will have to be changed; that the civil rights movement has been operating on fallacious assumptions, the main one being that coalition with whites is presently viable; and that the primary things blacks need are unity and political power. Carmichael and Hamilton make it clear, in addition, that they believe blacks must be opposed to the values of white middle-class America, and that blacks should identify, not with this nation as presently constituted, but with the "Third World" and the "Wars of National Liberation."

The case Carmichael and Hamilton make is damaging because the evidence of white America's abuse of black citizens is clear. But Carmichael and Hamilton make it equally clear by their own examination of "black power" in Lowndes and Tuskegee that they have overstated their case. In Lowndes, by their own account, it is apparent that black political power depended on effective white intervention in the form of the voting rights act of 1965--an act pushed by a white President, passed by a predominantly white Congress, and implemented by a predominantly white executive and judiciary. In Tuskegee, Carmichael and Hamilton's second example of potential black power, their account makes it clear that despite a local black majority and a secure black economic position, blacks have been able to gain and retain political power only when they have had the co-operation of whites.

The evidence provided by Carmichael and Hamilton in Black Power refutes much of their own case. It indicates that black-white co-operation has existed, that the laws are not always a sham, that the voting rights act was implemented, that whites have not always acted as a bloc, and, curiously, that the black political power that Carmichael and Hamilton insist is most important has been dependent, not on black separatism or revolt, but on co-operation with whites and utilization of white-dominated laws and institutions. Carmichael and Hamilton admit, in fact, that at best they can now hope only for pockets of black political power, and their evidence indicates that those pockets depend, in the end, on white co-operation. Their book calls for black separatism; its evidence indicates the need for co-operation and coalition with whites.

Martin Luther King's Reactions to "Black Power"

The Reaction to "Black Power" as a Slogan

"Black power" emerged as a slogan of the Negro protest movement in June, 1966, on the Meredith march through Mississippi. On that march, Dr. King debated the slogan with Stokely Carmichael and Floyd McKissick, its defenders, for some five hours in a Catholic parish house in Yazoo City.[1] Dr. King attacked the slogan on the basis that it would confuse the movement's allies, isolate the Negro community, and allow whites to deaden their conscience and justify their racism.[2] The difficulty with the slogan, Dr. King argued, was not its denotation or true meaning, for Negroes need pride and power, but its misleading connotations, violence and black domination, that were likely to confuse and alienate whites and justify their lingering prejudices and racism.[3] Despite Dr. King's arguments, Stokely Carmichael and Floyd McKissick refused to abandon the slogan, though they did agree not to chant it for the remainder of the march.[4]

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[1] *Why We Can't Wait*, p. 30.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 31.

[3] *Ibid*., pp. 30-31.

[4] *Ibid*., pp. 31-32.

Dr. King's Understanding of "Black Power"

Dr. King opposed "black power" as a slogan of the civil rights movement. Nevertheless, it became the rallying cry of a substantial portion of that movement. Dr. King evaluates that slogan as, first, a "cry of disappointment."[1] It is, he argues, a reaction to the abuse of "white power," to unpunished lynchings and burnings in Mississippi, to the resistance, faintheartedness and inconsistencies of those in power elsewhere.[2] In the South, the Negro's disappointment is increased, Dr. King argues, by a federal government that has passed civil rights laws but refused to implement them; in the North, the disappointment is fed by the continuation of ghettos, unemployment, housing discrimination and slum schools. Dr. King, like Carmichael and Hamilton, notes that the economic gap between white and Negro has increased; he notes, too, that schools in the North were more segregated in 1967 than in 1954.[3] The disenchantment of Negro Americans extends, according to Dr. King, to the foreign policies of the federal government as well as to the domestic policies. The contrast between white applause for the Negroes' adherence to nonviolence at home and the militaristic deployment of Negro soldiers abroad to use napalm to slaughter men, women and children causes wonder among young blacks, according to Dr. King.[4] "Black power," then, is a cry of disappointment.

"Black power" is, second, in what Dr. King terms its positive sense, a call to blacks to amass political and economic power in order to gain their legitimate goals.[5] Dr. King thinks the call to amass power is legitimate, for power is required to produce justice, but he adds that power is not to be contrasted with or opposed to love, for "power without love is reckless and abusive and . . . love without power is sentimental and anemic."[1] Power, then, is necessary, but it must be used constructively, with love, rather than destructively, in a conscienceless manner.[2] Dr. King points out that he wrote at length in Why We Can't Wait of the need for united political action.[3] The "black power" call to political action, then, parallels the earlier call to political action by the civil rights movement.[4] The "black power" call to economic unity and action finds a similar parallel. Dr. King agrees to the legitimacy of united economic action, describes his own organization's efforts along this line, but adds that "the ultimate answer to the Negroes' economic dilemma will be found in a massive federal program for all the poor along the lines of A. Philip Randolph's Freedom Budget."[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 31. [2] Ibid., p. 33. [3] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[4] Ibid., p. 35. [5] Ibid., p. 36.

"Black power" is, finally, a psychological call to manhood, according to Dr. King.[6] Negroes have been taught that they are inferior, that their color is a sign of biological depravity, that their history is one of worthlessness.[7] As slaves, they were deliberately taught unconditional submission and they were deprived of any dignity, sense of worth, or standards other than the master's.[8] Dr. King argues that:

> Out of the soil of slavery came the psychological roots of the Black Power cry. Anyone familiar with the Black Power movement recognizes that defiance of white authority and white power is a constant theme; the defiance almost becomes a kind of taunt. Underneath it, however, there is a legitimate concern that the Negro break away from "unconditional submission" and thereby assert his own selfhood.[9]

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[1] Ibid., p. 37.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., pp. 37-38.
[4] Ibid., p. 38.
[5] Ibid., pp. 38, 143-146.
[6] Ibid., p. 38.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., p. 39.
[9] Ibid., p. 40.

White America has ignored the accomplishments of the Negro, Dr. King notes, and he terms this obliteration of the record of Negro achievements "cultural homicide."[1] The Negro will never be free, he adds, until he can rise up and affirm his own manhood, until he can say to the world and himself: "I am somebody. I am a person. I am a man with dignity and honor. I have a rich and noble history, however painful and exploited that history has been. I am black _and_ comely."[2] The "black power" call to self-affirmation and manhood is a legitimate and necessary one, according to Dr. King. Without it, there can be no freedom.[3]

"Black Power" is a Philosophy of Nihilism

"Black power," according to Dr. King, is a nihilistic philosophy "born out of the conviction that the Negro can't win."[4] Dr. King admits that the civil rights movement, by raising the hopes of American Negroes, is partly to blame for the rise of the "black power" philosophy, for when the hopes were dashed, when Negroes saw only "more poverty, more school segregation and more slums," despair crept in.[5] But Dr. King insists that: ". . . revolution, though born of despair, cannot long be sustained by despair. This is the ultimate contradiction of the Black Power movement."[6] The "black power" movement, though it claims to be the most revolutionary wing of the social revolution now taking place in America, "rejects the one thing that keeps the fire of revolutions burning: the ever-present flame of hope. When hope dies, a revolution degenerates into an undiscriminating catchall for evanescent and futile gestures."[1] Negroes, Dr. King argues, cannot entrust their future to a philosophy rooted in despair, a philosophy without a program.[2]

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 40.
[2] _Ibid_., pp. 43-44.
[3] _Ibid_.
[4] _Ibid_., p. 44.
[5] _Ibid_., pp. 45-45.
[6] _Ibid_., p. 45.

"Black power," according to Dr. King, is the wrong answer to real disappointments. Using this assertion as a springboard, Dr. King introduces his own philosophy of the process of revolutions. He argues that in any social revolution there will be times when rapid progress is made and other times when disappointments and setbacks dominate.[3] A great movement, he adds, will be marked by the courage and determination to press on in spite of obstacles.[4] The "black power" movement, on the other hand, "like the Garvey 'back to Africa' movement of the 1920's, represents a dashing of hope, a conviction of the inability of the Negro to win. . . ."[5]

> We Negroes, who have dreamed for so long of freedom, are still confined in a prison of segregation and discrimination. Must we respond with bitterness and cynicism? Certainly not, for this can lead to black anger so desperate that it ends in black suicide. Must we turn inward in self-pity? Of course not, for this can lead to a self-defeating black paranoia. Must we conclude that we cannot win? Certainly not, for this will lead to a black nihilism that seeks disruption for disruption's sake. Must we, by fatalistically concluding that segregation is a foreordained pattern of the universe, resign ourselves to oppression? Of course not, for passively to cooperate with an unjust system makes the oppressed as evil as the oppressors. Our most fruitful course is to stand firm, move forward nonviolently, accept disappointments and cling to hope. Our determined refusal not to be stopped will eventually open the door to fulfillment. By recognizing the necessity of suffering in a righteous cause, we may achieve our humanity's full stature. To guard ourselves from bitterness, we need the vision to see in this generation's ordeals the opportunity to transfigure both ourselves and American society.[6]

Hope and nonviolent action, not futile gestures of despair, are Dr. King's counsel.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 46.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_., p. 47.

[4] _Ibid_.

[5] _Ibid_.

[6] _Ibid_., pp. 46-47.

The Errors of Black Separatism

"Black power" calls for the mobilization of black political and economic power. More important in distinguishing it from the rest of the civil rights movement, it de-emphasizes the importance of coalition and co-operation with whites and it stresses what amounts to black separatism. Dr. King attacks this tendency toward separatism. He argues, first, that black separatism will not produce black political power.[1] While admitting that there are a few counties and cities where blacks are a majority, Dr. King insists that concentration on them would "leave the vast majority of Negroes outside the mainstream of American political life."[2] To illustrate the point, Dr. King points out that even in Alabama, where SNCC tried to develop an all-black political party, only nine of the more than eighty counties have a Negro majority.[3] He adds that even if Negroes controlled those nine counties, they would have little influence in state politics and they could do little to help the major Negro population centers in Birmingham, Montgomery and Mobile.[4] There are, Dr. King adds, few Congressional districts in the South where blacks can be elected without the help of whites.[5] And Dr. King sums up his case by asking, rhetorically: "Is it a sounder program to concentrate on the election of two or three Negro Congressmen from predominately Negro districts or to concentrate on the election of fifteen or twenty Negro Congressmen from Southern districts where a coaliton of Negro and white moderate voters is possible?"[6] Dr. King objects to black separatism because, politically, it promises control of a few isolated

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1. Ibid., p. 48.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., pp. 48-49.
6. Ibid., p. 49.

counties and cities, but it dooms the vast majority of Negroes to live without political power and it abandons the more important levels of government, the state and national levels, to whites.

Black separatism in politics is morally unjustifiable as well as impractical, according to Dr. King. While SNCC workers are right in claiming that there are, at present, no white liberals and moderates in Lowndes County with whom they can co-operate, Lowndes is not, according to Dr. King, the measuring rod of the nation.[1] "The basic thing in determining the best candidate is not his color but his integrity."[2] Moreover, Dr. King insists, Negro politicians can be as opportunistic as whites, and black power is as likely to lead to social injustice as white power.[3] The need, then, is not black power or white power but rather a coalition of Negroes and whites that will work to make the major political parties responsive to the plight of the poor.[4] Black separatism, Dr. King observes, neither envisions nor desires such a program.[5]

Black separatism in economics, like black separatism in politics, will fail, according to Dr. King.[6] While agreeing that Negroes must pool their economic resources and withdraw support from firms that discriminate, Dr. King still insists that the larger economic problems of the Negro community can only be met by federal programs costing billions of dollars.[7] Coalition with whites is necessary, Dr. King argues, because blacks lack the economic resources to:

> . . . create the multiplicity of new jobs and provide the number of low-cost houses that will lift the Negro out of the economic depression

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[1] *Ibid*. [2] *Ibid*. [3] *Ibid*. [4] *Ibid*.

[5] *Ibid*. [6] *Ibid.* [7] *Ibid*., p. 50.

> caused by centuries of deprivation. Neither can our resources supply quality integrated education. All of this requires billions of dollars which only an alliance of liberal-labor-civil-rights forces can stimulate.[1]

Economically, too, black separatism is self-defeating.

Advocates of "black power" defend their calls to black separatism by comparing black separatism to earlier united action by Italian, Irish and Jewish immigrant groups. Dr. King replies that it is a myth that other immigrant groups rose to power by separatism. While these groups did stick together, they invariably enlarged their power by joining in alliances with other groups. The truth, according to Dr. King, is that no group can make it alone in a multiracial society. While Negroes will need organized strength, that strength, to be effective, will have to be consolidated through constructive alliances with whites.[2]

Black power advocates have argued that coalitions with whites are unsound because whites, as a group, cannot be genuinely concerned about Negro progress. Whites, these people argue, cannot be trusted. Dr. King responds by admitting that occasional betrayals will occur, but he argues against a blanket distrust of whites by pointing out that some whites have died heroicly for the Negro cause and others have worked for that cause at considerable economic and political peril to themselves.[3] Furthermore, Negro-white coalitions have played an important and constructive role in the past successes of the movement. The Birmingham and Selma confrontations could not have produced the civil rights acts without the support of the "aroused conscience of white America," and that support will be needed again, Dr. King argues, because 10 per cent of the population cannot induce 90 per cent to change its way of life by tensions alone.[1] In sum, too great a cynicism about white motives ignores important past white support and deprives Negroes of needed future support.

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[1] _Ibid_.

[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_., p. 51.

Dr. King argues that Negroes need allies. Those allies may be found, he states, in two groups: the first is that substantial portion of the white majority that cherishes democratic principles above privilege; the second, larger in size than the first, is composed of the white poor who share common needs with the Negro.[2] There are, Dr. King notes, more poor whites than Negroes and their need for a war on poverty is as great.[3] By joining alliances with these two groups of whites, Dr. King argues, Negroes join a common endeavor and, instead of losing their independence, they use it for constructive and multiplied gains.[4] The ability to enter alliances, Dr. King adds, is a sign of strength, not weakness.[5] Negro-white co-operation on the basis of conscience and proper self-interest can obtain the strength to alter basic institutions by democratic means; Negro separatism and isolation can never approach this goal.[6]

Turning to the subject of Negro identity, Dr. King argues that Negroes must accept an ambivalent position. Physically and culturally, he argues, the Negro is a child of two heritages, African and American.[7] Seeking wholeness, Dr. King continues, some Negroes reject their color; others, black separatists, try to reject everything American. The first group becomes frustrated because of a lack of cultural roots; the second group becomes frustrated also, for the American Negro is not an African.[8]

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., p. 52.

[5] Ibid. [6] Ibid. [7] Ibid., p. 53. [8] Ibid.

The American Negro, Dr. King asserts, is a hybrid, a child of two cultures, an Afro-American.[1] The American Negro is a descendant of slaves, an offspring of noble men and women kidnapped and chained like beasts, an heir of the great and exploited continent of Africa, an heir, too, of a past of rope, fire and murder.[2] The American Negro should not be ashamed of this past, Dr. King argues; instead, he should be ashamed of those so inhuman that they could inflict this torture.[3] And yet, the American Negro is still an American. His destiny is linked with America's destiny. America remains his home.

> Since we are Americans the solution to our problem will not come through seeking to build a separate black nation within a nation, but by finding that creative minority of the concerned from the ofttimes apathetic majority, and together moving toward that colorless power that we all need for security and justice.[4]

Black and white together must be partners in power. As Dr. King puts it:

> In the first century B.C., Cicero said: "Freedom is participation in power." Negroes should never want all power because they would deprive others of their freedom. By the same token, Negroes can never be content without participation in power. America must be a nation in which its multiracial people are partners in power. This is the essence of democracy toward which all Negro struggles have been directed since the distant past when he was transplanted here in chains.[5]

Black separatism is an error, Dr. King argues, because it offers neither political nor economic power; because it ignores the fact that integrity, and corruption or abuse of power, have no color lines; because it misunderstands how other minority groups came to power and even what it means to be a Negro in America; and because it forecloses the possibility of that true freedom which is partnership in power.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 53.

[4] Ibid., p. 54.

[5] Ibid.

American Negro, Dr. King insists, does not need President Johnson's reminder to Negro rioters that they are outnumbered ten to one to realize that violence is futile. The failure of earlier Negro insurrections, despite the courageous efforts of Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner, "should be eternal reminders to us that violent rebellion is doomed from the start."[1] But violence is not only ineffective, it is also costly for the Negro participants:

> Anyone leading a violent rebellion must be willing to make an honest assessment regarding the possible casualties to a minority population confronting a well-armed, wealthy majority with a fanatical right wing that would delight in exterminating thousands of black men, women and children.[2]

Nor do the frequently heard arguments that the world is two-thirds colored impress Dr. King. Any idea that the oppressed people of color will violently rise and throw off white oppression is dismissed by Dr. King as "beyond the realm of serious discussion."[3] No colored nation, Dr. King argues, including China, now shows even the potential for leading a violent international revolution of the colored. Dr. King adds that the black nations of Ghana, Zambia, Tanganyika and Nigeria are so busy combatting poverty, illiteracy and neo-colonialism that they offer little hope to the blacks of Angola, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa and none to the American Negro.[4] Dr. King concludes: "The hard cold facts today indicate that the hope of the people of color in the world may well rest on the American Negro and his ability to reform the structure of racist imperialism from within and thereby turn the technology and wealth of the West to the task of liberating the world from want."[5]

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[1] _Ibid_. [2] _Ibid_., pp. 56-57. [3] _Ibid_., p. 57.

[4] _Ibid_. [5] _Ibid_.

The futility of violence as a tool for Negro progress has been demonstrated in all the recent riots, according to Dr. King.[1] The participants, fighting hopelessly and aimlessly against impossible odds, display "a desire for self-destruction, a suicidal longing."[2] Those defending the riots, Dr. King adds, always end up with stumbling words when asked what concrete gains have been won as a result.[3] At best, Dr. King argues, the riots produced a little antipoverty money and a few water sprinklers, but nowhere did they produce real improvements in the slums.[4] Nonviolence, on the other hand, has a remarkable record of achievements.

> The 1960 sit-ins desegregated lunch counters in more than 150 cities within a year. The 1961 Freedom Rides put an end to segregation in interstate travel. The 1956 bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, ended segregation on the buses not only of that city but in practically every city of the South. The 1963 Birmingham movement and the climatic March on Washington won passage of the most powerful civil rights law in a century. The 1965 Selma movement brought enactment of the Voting Rights Law. Our nonviolent marches in Chicago last summer brought about a housing agreement which, if implemented, will be the strongest step toward open housing taken in any city in the nation.[5]

Most significantly, Dr. King adds, this progress through nonviolence occurred with minimum loss of life and sacrifice.[6] "Fewer people have been killed in ten years of nonviolent demonstrations across the South than were killed in one night of rioting in Watts."[7]

Advocates of violence, Dr. King asserts, lack a program. When pinned down they are blatantly illogical, speaking of overthrowing racist local and state governments.[8]

> They fail to see that no internal revolution has ever succeeded in overthrowing a government by violence unless the government had already lost the allegiance and effective control of its armed forces. Anyone in his

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., pp. 57-58.

[5] Ibid., p. 58. [6] Ibid. [7] Ibid. [8] Ibid.

> right mind knows that this will not happen in the United States. In a violent racial situation, the power structure has the local police, the state troopers, the national guard and finally the army to call on, all of which are predominantly white.[1]

Furthermore, few if any violent revolutions have succeeded without the sympathy and support of the majority of the population.[2] "It is perfectly clear that a violent revolution on the part of American blacks would find no sympathy and support from the white population and very little from the majority of the Negroes themselves.[3] Only nonviolence, not violence, offers a strategy for action that will bring the Negro into the American mainstream as quickly as possible.[4]

Having argued that violence won't work, Dr. King adds that it fails to appeal to conscience.[5] Citing a "black power" advocate who had told him: "To hell with conscience and morality. We want power," Dr. King replies that power and morality must go together, implementing and ennobling each other.[6] Dr. King approves the words of Alfred the Great: "Power is never good unless he who has it is good."[7] Dr. King goes further to state that nonviolence is power, the right and good use of power.[8] Only by holding to nonviolence, Dr. King argues, can that substantial portion of the white community that suffers irrational fears of the type that buttress racial segregation have their fears mitigated.[9] As Dr. King puts it:

> The problem with hatred and violence is that they intensify the fears of the white majority, and leave them less ashamed of their prejudices toward Negroes. In the guilt and confusion confronting our society, violence only adds to the chaos. It deepens the brutality of

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 59. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.* [6] *Ibid.* [7] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[8] *Ibid.* [9] *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

> the oppressor and increases the bitterness of the oppressed. Violence is the antithesis of creativity and wholeness. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible.[1]

Responding next to the argument that blacks must first win their freedom in this nation, then choose integration or separation, Dr. King replies that: "This is a multiracial nation where all groups are dependent on each other, whether they want to recognize it or not. In this vast interdependent nation no racial group can retreat to an island entire of itself."[2] Blacks, according to Dr. King, do not have the option of separation first. Liberation, he argues, requires integration. "I cannot see how the Negro will be totally liberated from the crushing weight of poor education, squalid housing and economic strangulation until he is integrated, with power, into every level of American life."[3] Thus, "in our society liberation cannot come without integration and integration cannot come without liberation."[4] Integration, ethically and politically, remains the goal. By ethical integration, Dr. King means true intergroup and interpersonal living; by political integration, he means the mutual sharing of power.[5] The American Negro wants into society and he wants his share of power on every level of that society.[6]

Power, Dr. King makes clear, is not to be sought for its own sake, but to make the world and nation better places to live. And violence, he argues, will fail to accomplish that, for violence merely increases hatred, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy.[7] The beauty of nonviolence, according to Dr. King, is that it seeks to break the chain of hate and evil; it is, then, "the most practically sound and morally excellent way for the Negro to achieve freedom."[1] Turning to the assertion that violence is the wave of the future, that a Negro leader must turn to violence or be out of step with the ghetto, Dr. King replies that the vast majority of Negroes reject violence and that, even if they did not, he is not interested in determining what is right by taking a Gallup poll.[2] In Nazi Germany, Dr. King comments, the leaders who kept "in step with the times" by taking a poll discovered that anti-Semitism was the trend of the time and, to "keep in touch," they yielded to one of the worst evils of history.[3] The genuine leader, Dr. King states, molds consensus rather than searching for it; he is a man of conviction rather than conformity.[4] Dr. King rejects the polling approach to leadership. As he puts it: "If every Negro in the United States turns to violence, I will choose to be that one voice preaching that this is the wrong way."[5] For the true leader, the argument that violence is the current trend is no argument for its adoption as a philosophy.

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[1] Ibid., p. 61. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 62. [4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 62. [6] Ibid. [7] Ibid.

On the other hand, one of the arguments of the black power advocates is turned by Dr. King against their own philosophy of liberation by violence. These advocates of black power, Dr. King comments, speak unceasingly of their refusal to imitate the values of white society, but by advocating violence they advocate, paradoxically, "the worst, the most brutal and the most uncivilized value of American life."[6] Negroes, Dr. King asserts, have not been mass murders or hooded perpetrators of violence; neither have they been saints, as a check of hospitals in any Negro community on any Saturday night will reveal. The answer to the anger in the Negro community is not turning the violence outward, for that would merely redirect the evil; the answer,

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[1] Ibid., p. 63. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid. [5] Ibid. [6] Ibid.

Dr. King asserts, is the way of nonviolence which "provides a healthy way to deal with understandable anger."[1] Hate, Dr. King insists, is as injurious to the hater as the hated. It corrodes the personality and is the source of many of our inner conflicts.[2] Having seen the hate in the countenances of Mississippi and Alabama sheriffs, Dr. King refuses, he says, to advise the Negro to sink to that miserable level. "Hate," Dr. King argues, "is too great a burden to bear."[3] To the argument that nonviolence is impractical, that life is a matter of dog eat dog, Dr. King responds that mankind has long followed the so-called practical way, and it has led inexorably to deeper confusion and chaos. "Time is cluttered with the wreckage of individuals and communities that surrendered to hatred and violence. For the salvation of our nation and the salvation of mankind, we must follow another way."[4] Be militant, Dr. King argues, but don't relinquish the privilege and obligation to love.[5]

For his concluding argument against violence, Dr. King turns to Frantz Fanon, one of the apostles of a violent revolt by the colored of the world, an author frequently cited by the advocates of black power, and cites his argument that colored people must not merely reflect the society and thought of Europe, but must instead "work out new concepts" and "set afoot a new man."[6] These are brave and challenging words, according to Dr. King, but Fanon and his followers are seeking to create the new man by imitating the old concepts of violence.[7] Dr. King asks: "Is there not a basic contradiction here? Violence has been the inseparable twin of materialism, the hallmark of its grandeur and misery. This is the one thing about modern civilization that I do not care to imitate."[1] Acceptance of violence, Dr. King argues, is blind imitation of the past, and to really begin anew, mankind must turn away from violence.[2] "May it not be that the new man the world needs is the nonviolent man?"[3] Dr. King concludes, speaking of nonviolence:

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., pp. 64-65. [4] Ibid., p. 65.

[5] Ibid. [6] Ibid., p. 66. [7] Ibid.

> This not only will make us new men, but will give us a new kind of power. It will not be Lord Acton's image of power that tends to corrupt or absolute power that corrupts absolutely. It will be power infused with love and justice, that will change dark yesterday into bright tomorrows, and lift us from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope. A dark, desperate, confused and sin-sick world waits for this new kind of man and this new kind of power.[4]

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid.

Chapter V

NONVIOLENCE, "BLACK POWER," AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Rise of the Nonviolence Movement--Causes

Nonviolent protest, though recommended to Negroes as early as the 1930's by Reinhold Niebuhr[1] and practiced by CORE as early as 1942, did not assume a central place in the Negro protest movement until the late 1950's and early 1960's. From 1960 until 1966, nonviolence occupied perhaps the central role in the movement; since then it has had to combat the alternative of "black power." The first problem, then, is to discover the factors leading to the rapid growth of nonviolence after 1956. One factor, undoubtedly, was the quality of its advocates and leaders. Dr. King, for example, who came to the public's attention in the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-1956, has displayed, time and time again, a powerful capacity to move his audiences--intellectually, morally, emotionally and physically.

A second factor, complementary to the first, was the nature of the Southern Negro community to which Dr. King appealed. That community was centered around the Christian church and it accepted nonviolence, not as an abstract philosophy imported from distant India, but as the specially appropriate social expression of Christian love, as a technique or way of life at once effective, moral, redeeming, and compatible with its belief in Christianity and democracy. Taught to a Christian community, in Christian churches, often by Christian ministers--Dr. King, James Lawson, John Lewis, Ralph Abernathy--as an expression of Christian love, nonviolence gained rapid acceptance.

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), pp. 252-254.

A third factor in the rapid acceptance of nonviolence was its ability to meet certain psychological needs of the participants. The movement provided a nonviolent and often constructive outlet for the previously suppressed or redirected feelings of anger, frustration and resentment. It provided, too, a sense of worth and dignity stemming from courageous and self-disciplined action in the cause of freedom; a cause, it may be added, that provided a sense of meaning and purpose for the lives of those engaged in the struggle. It provided, also, the sense of companionship or brotherhood between participants, often across race lines, that accompanies joint participation in a dangerous enterprise. For white participants it provided an expression of conscience, a relief of guilt and, for some, a form of rebellion against society. Nonviolent direct action, then, served various psychological needs and functions.

But there are various ways of meeting psychological needs. The rapid acceptance of nonviolence may better be explained by its successes, and those successes depended, in turn, on certain social and political functions that nonviolence performed. In a democracy, the expectation is that grievances will be expressed and remedied by the ballot, but Negroes in the South had been excluded from the ballot since the turn of the century and before. Excluded from the ballot, Negroes turned, through the NAACP, to the courts--an alternative means of redressing grievances that provided a steady string of successes culminating in the public school desegregation decisions of 1954. As long as steady progress was being made through the courts, the NAACP's technique of legal challenges went largely unchallenged in the Negro community. By the mid-fifties, however, it began to appear that the legal technique was nearing the limit of its effectiveness. Following the school desegregation decisions, the Deep South, in which segregationists dominated the local and state governments and much of the federal judiciary, began to blunt legal action by ignoring the rulings of the Supreme Court until each particular instance of defiance was itself challenged in the courts, and by prolonged litigation after challenged. Even when the segregationists lost, as they usually did, they were quick to discover new procedures to accomplish old ends, and it began to look at though the South was going to make good its boast of "a hundred years of litigation."

It was at this point, when legal and peaceful methods of change within the political system appeared to have been exhausted, that nonviolence appeared. The great merit of nonviolence in this situation was that it allowed effective action to be taken against the segregation system even though Negroes were excluded from the formal political processes and were, in effect, defeated in the legal ones. Nonviolence gained a following because it found a way to produce change while bypassing the political and legal system that had failed the Negro. It retained that following as long as it appeared to provide an effective technique of social change. In sum, nonviolence gained its popularity because it worked. It worked in a number of ways: by direct moral confrontation, by economic coercion, by the political coercion of a crisis, and, especially as used by Dr. King, by building a dramatic confrontation in a symbolic center of oppression, which led to the

the type of harsh repression that produced, outside the South, moral outrage leading, in turn, to political and legal intervention; in other words, nonviolence, operating outside the formal political processes, nevertheless became a formidable political instrument.

Nonviolent direct action, then, performed a number of varied, but important, functions, all of which contributed to its popularity as a technique of social change. Thus, it gave a constructive outlet for impatience and frustration; it provided a sense of individual and social self-respect and power; it provided a means of dramatizing the magnitude and evil of segregation; it developed crises which led to negotiation, sometimes to local accommodation, at other times to the mobilization of national opinion and to passage of the 1964 and 1965 civil rights acts; and it brought the executive and legislative branches of the federal government reluctantly but forcefully to the aid of the federal judiciary--which, as has been noted, had about reached its limits of effectiveness acting alone.

Functions of Nonviolence in a Democracy

On the basis of the 1960-1966 period during which nonviolence was the dominant partner in the Negro protest movement, generalizations can be made about the social role of nonviolence in a democratic society. Nonviolence may be useful when a disadvantaged group is denied access to the political institutions which are designed to prevent abuses and articulate protest. It is also needed when the disadvantaged group is included in the political institutions, but constitutes a minority with insufficient votes to gain redress of its grievances through those channels under ordinary circumstances (by dramatizing its plight, inducing a crisis, and making a moral appeal, nonviolence may overcome a deficiency in numbers). Nonviolence is needed or useful, too, when the ordinary paths of redress are too slow, as when the South threatened and began to deliver a hundred of years of litigation on segregation. Equally important, perhaps, is the role that nonviolence may play in enlarging the scope of governmental action. By crisis formation and moral appeal nonviolence may lead the government to intervene in areas previously considered private--as when it forced the government to act against segregation in private businesses. Nonviolence may, on the other hand, operate to restrict the area of government action, as when it resulted in the destruction of the system of governmentally imposed segregation. Finally, of course, nonviolence may reach areas which government action may not reach. Initially this was the case with the sit-ins and boycotts which forced private businesses to desegregate their facilities or hire Negroes; later, of course, these became the realm of public action.

There is another way of looking at the role of nonviolent protest in a democracy. Traditionally, in democratic theory, a government must rest on the consent of the governed or the governed may rise up in revolt and overthrow the government. The alternatives, then, are government resting on consent or violent revolt. Neither applied well to American Negroes. They were, despite exclusion from the political processes in the South and unjust treatment elsewhere, loyal to the government. They wanted into society, not out of it; they wanted full voice in the government, not overthrow of it. Nonviolence, which bypassed the political institutions from which Negroes had been excluded, provided an answer. Bypassing the formal political processes, it worked for inclusion in those processes; breaking particular laws, it affirmed a respect for law as an institution and to the governments that made those laws. With nonviolence, American Negroes could avoid both submission to injustice and violent revolt; with nonviolence, they could knock on the door rather than knock the house down--and the latter, as some argued, was impractical anyway when the exploited group was a small minority of the population. Nonviolence, then, proved a useful supplement to the formal political and legal institutions of democracy.

Rise of Disillusionment with Nonviolence--Causes

Nonviolence accomplished a great deal in the period 1960-1966. It became, in those few years, the dominant philosophy and technique of social change in the Negro protest movement. By 1965, however, elements of that movement, SNCC and CORE particularly, were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with nonviolence. This dissatisfaction with nonviolence stemmed from a number of causes. One, certainly, was the extraordinarily brutal suppression of SNCC and CORE activities in Mississippi, Alabama and Southwest Georgia between 1962 and 1964. Both groups, SNCC particularly, had concentrated their efforts on the most resisting areas of the Deep South and their three year effort to register significant numbers of Negroes or bring about sufficient federal intervention to protect Negro rights in those areas had failed. The Mississippi Summer Project of 1964, primarily a SNCC and CORE endeavor, was the brutal climax to their efforts. That project was followed, in relatively quick succession, by the failure of the National Democratic Party to seat the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegates at the 1964 national convention, by the brutal police suppression of marchers in Selma, Alabama, in the spring of 1965 and by the failure of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party Congressional challenge in that same year. Nonviolence, which postulated white co-operation on at least the national level, seemed more and more, to many SNCC and CORE workers, a hopeless cause. Since most SNCC and CORE militants in the Deep South were not committed to nonviolence as a way of life, they needed visible signs of success, and the signs they saw, in Alabama and Mississippi, were falling clubs and a federal government unwilling or unable to intervene massively and effectively to protect Negro rights. Under these circumstances, the body or spirit finally rebelled; even John Lewis, chairman of SNCC and a Christian minister who was committed to nonviolence as a way of life, found, after Selma, that he could not face another clubbing, and John Lewis had demonstrated great courage time and time again. By 1965 many of the workers in SNCC and CORE were losing faith in nonviolence.

The disillusionment and dissatisfaction with nonviolence that had deeply penetrated SNCC and CORE by the late summer of 1964 and the early spring of 1965 began to spread both within those organizations and outside them in the following years. In part this was because nonviolence was facing increasing difficulties and producing fewer spectacular results. The causes of these difficulties were several. First, the "easy" victories for nonviolence were soon won. Once nonviolent protest had dramatized the evils and revealed their magnitude, it was difficult for any reasonable man with a conscience to tolerate the flagrant Southern defiance of the law of the land and the clearly unjust and unreasonable system of governmentally enforced segregation that extended from top to bottom of Southern society. Moral condemnation and federal intervention soon followed. By 1965, however, the "easy" victories over the stark injustices had been won and further advance had become more difficult.

One reason that further advance had become more difficult by 1965 was that the methods of opposition to nonviolence had grown more sophisticated.

The brutal clubbing and mob violence that originally greeted nonviolent protest backfired against the segregationists and produced the shock and moral outrage that soon led to intervention by the rest of the nation. In due course, even the public officials of the Deepest South realized that violent suppression of nonviolent protestors before the mass media was likely to be counterproductive. They learned, instead, to "let them march." The new wisdom of the segregationists was expressed, for example, by the governor of Mississippi, Paul Johnson, to the whites of Grenada, Mississippi, in September, 1966, pending a visit by Martin Luther King. As the governor put it: "The civil rights act now before Congress is moving toward certain defeat. Only a violent incident which focuses the spotlight of unfavorable publicity on the South can salvage this vicious legislation."[1] Denied a dramatic confrontation between nonresisting protestors and clubbing police or violent mobs, the civil rights legislation died. The South had learned a lesson and the perfect foils of nonviolent protest, the "Bull" Connors, were disappearing; with them went much of the effectiveness of nonviolence. The North, of course, had already learned this lesson; at least its public officials had, and police protection for marchers in the North was better when the leaders of nonviolence finally turned their attention in that direction. In addition, the North had long ago learned the value of token concessions that make injustice less apparent, more difficult to prove or dramatize, and more difficult to attack, consequently, with the tactic of nonviolence. By 1966 nonviolence had been partly defanged by more sophisticated forms of resistance.

A third difficulty facing nonviolence by the middle of the decade was that the demands of the movement had begun to affect the entire nation, not merely the South. Nonviolence, as a result, lost one of its most effective weapons, the ability to point out shocking injustices in one part of the nation and have them removed by the intervention of the rest of the nation. In other words, nonviolence had lost the large unaffected spectator group to whom it could appeal without asking, of them, personal sacrifice. It had lost its outside leverage. By the middle of the decade the nonviolence movement was demanding open housing, open unions, and fair employment legislation, and the whites who had pushed so enthusiastically for reforms in the South grew hushed. But that is an oversimplification. The truth is, not only was the entire nation now affected, but the issues themselves were more complex and less morally self-evident. It is obvious that when the Constitution guarantees Negroes the right to vote, states have no legal right to deny them the vote, but are Negroes due compensatory advantages in employment whereby a Negro job-seeker will be preferred over an equally qualified or better qualified white job-seeker as was demanded by Whitney Young, Jr. and Dr. King? Segregation in public accommodations is obviously wrong, but can the state tell a citizen to whom he must sell his home? Separate and unequal schools are clearly unjust, but is busing of students a wise, prudent or morally necessary solution to slum schools and de facto segregation? The answer to all these questions may be "yes," but the white public is not so sure and it was more difficult to pose the issue clearly and persuade the public by nonviolent protests. Furthermore, as Dr. King pointed out, the demands of the movement had moved from those that caused whites discomfort or distaste--desegregation of schools and public accommodations--to those that required economic sacrifice. Eliminating slums, providing a good education for all, training the previously unemployable, all these were things that were going to cost a lot of money, and money, due in part to the war in Vietnam, was hard to come by. White resistance grew as the new demands of the movement began to affect the entire nation, as the demands grew less morally self-evident, as they moved from political to economic and social equality, as they began to call for white economic sacrifice. As white resistance grew, and white co-operation declined, disillusionment with nonviolence grew apace.

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[1] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), September 19, 1966, p. 1.

When, in the middle of the decade, the nonviolence movement turned part of its attention to the North, it found the Negroes of the Northern ghettos to be more hostile, less religious, less willing to adhere to nonviolence or to accept it as a way of life. Northern Negroes had heard the slogan, "Freedom Now," for years, but they had felt few of the benefits of the nonviolence campaigns which had been concentrated on the South and had produced there things the Northern Negro had already--open public accommodations and the right to vote. Moreover, despite the right to vote and access to public accommodations, despite various civil rights laws, the Northern Negro was still locked in his ghetto. Having reason to expect more, and being denied it, the Northern Negro had reason to be more frustrated and bitter, and he was, in consequence, less receptive to the virtues of nonviolence. In addition, the discriminations of the North were often less blatant, less clear-cut, hence more difficult to attack with nonviolence which depends, to a considerable degree, on the clear moral confrontation. Nonviolence, then, faced increased difficulties as it moved North.

Finally, the peace movement, which grew rapidly in the middle of the decade, drained people and energy from the Negro protest movement, divided the attention of many who remained, and allowed an easy relief of conscience for many whites who were able to dismiss those in the movement as disloyal or traitors. In addition, the attention of the nation, concentrated for a while on the plight of the Negro, began to shift--to Vietnam, to the Middle East, to the threat of riots in the cities, to the problems of high taxation and inflation. The fever of reform, once so high, subsided as the nation's attention drifted away, as the moral complexities increased, and as the demonstrations became less novel and dramatic, even commonplace and boring.

In the end, the test of nonviolence, as it had been of Booker T. Washington's philosophy of accommodation and the NAACP's legalism, was its ability to deliver full equality, and by 1966 many Negroes had concluded that nonviolence had about exhausted its possibilities, that it could not move beyond tokenism. Why the move to alternative philosophies, to "black power" and violence? Simply put, nonviolence, while it had raised expectations, had not produced enough, rapidly enough, to satisfy the militants. For nonviolence to remain the dominant philosophy of the movement, it would have to be perceived by the Negro to be producing, rapidly, what it had promised--"Freedom Now." And that was not at all clear in Mississippi in 1964 or the Northern ghettos in 1965, 1966, 1967, and 1968.

If it can be said of SNCC, CORE and the other "black power" advocates who gave up on nonviolence and co-operation with whites that they showed the righteousness of the fanatic, that they showed no understanding of the compromises necessary in democratic politics, that they had a tendency to work for something until it was nearly achieved and then become convinced that the goal was, after all, only shadow, not substance, only one more token rather than reality, still it must be said in their defense that from the perspective of the victim, the American system had promised much and delivered little, that its vaunted virtues of compromise and moderation had entrenched racism and hypocrisy for generation after generation, that its legal and political system had allowed a mockery of the Constitution, that the strongest government in history could not enforce the rights of its citizens, or would not, and the wealthiest nation found that it could accept, or ignore, the poverty and misery of at least one family in five, and yet boast of its government, its laws, its economic system, its compassion, its freedom. Black Americans had tried. They had tried Booker T. Washington's ingratiating accommodation, Marcus T. Garvey's black nationalism, the NAACP's legal methods, Dr. King's nonviolence, the riots, then rebellion. The NAACP won in the courts, but, as Roy Wilkins put it in explaining the rise of the nonviolence movement, having won the game, they changed the rules on us. Nonviolence, for a while, had seemed the answer, but then some whites found that too much power, or the subtle use of power and evasion, could defeat nonviolence, especially when many whites grew weary of the moral crusade and the nonviolent method spread from the South to the North, threatening all alike, leaving no effective outsiders to exert their leverage. And so, from the professional organizers who did not have the perspective of faith to balance their view, reconcile their frustrations and give hope despite discouragement, came the cry of despair--hate, violence, rebellion. Yet to understand is not to accept, and "black power," like nonviolence, must be judged--as a philosophy and as a prudent political tactic.

Nonviolence and "Black Power" Contrasted

Nonviolence: A Philosophy of Universal Brotherhood

Nonviolence, accepted as a philosophy or way of life, not merely as a tactic, stresses those things that unite men in a universal brotherhood. Indeed, reliance upon nonviolence assumes, necessarily, that one can appeal, with hope of success, across race or national or class lines as Gandhi did in South Africa and India and as Dr. King does in the United States. Such an appeal makes sense, and can be successful, only if there is something common to all men, transcending race or class or nation, to which one can appeal; nonviolence can only be successful, that is, if men are, potentially at least, reasonable and moral beings, sharing the capacity to perceive irrational differences or distinctions and to be morally outraged by them. If this belief in the rationality and moral capacity of all men is mistaken, if reason and morality exist only within the boundaries of one race, one nation, or one class, or if they exist not at all, then nonviolence is bound to fail, for there would be no reason for the oppressor to give up his oppression, no reason why injustice should be righted, no reason why the protestors should not simply be imprisoned, or ignored, or exterminated. Nonviolence, then, assumes the brotherhood of all men in at least one sense by assuming, at least potentially, a common morality which can be found by reason and conscience.

Nonviolence, as a philosophy, tends toward and seeks integration of the human community. It postulates the existence of things more important than race or national or class lines. It attempts to find that which is common, to bring men together in understanding, to build a society that is mutually acceptable to the various groups or individuals within it, and it assumes that such a society is possible because the groups share reason and morality, because each group can recognize and respect the equal dignity and importance of the others. Nonviolence, then, while it recognizes the plurality and diverseness of human groups, nevertheless believes in an objective standard of justice that can be seen and sought by all and in a harmony that can exist across race, class or national boundaries.

The philosophy of nonviolence rests on the assumption that men can reason across group lines and find mutually tolerable solutions to problems. It is, then, compatible in spirit with pluralistic democracy, which reduces to a minimum the necessity for coercion and violence in government by reliance on persuasion and voluntary consent. Nevertheless, nonviolence, though compatible with democracy in what it assumes about men, is indeed a two-edged sword, for it poses a potential threat to democracy and to all government. That threat has two aspects. First, nonviolent mass demonstrations, engaged in without restraint and discipline, may evade the responsibility to pay the penalty for breaking the law and may, therefore, show disrespect not only for a particular law, but for all law. Second, nonviolent civil disobedience, used without discretion and judgment, can degenerate into the principle of anarchy--that no one need or should do anything that doesn't please himself. Government and society cannot long exist on that basis, hence nonviolence, which tends to stress individual judgment to an extraordinary degree, poses a possible threat to society. Nonviolence, then, is a tool of social change that must be used responsibly, with judgment and prudence, and probably should be reserved, when civil disobedience is used, to issues perceived to be of great importance. Used responsibly, nonviolence is a useful supplement to formal political processes; used irresponsibly, nonviolence could undermine those ties of law and due process that make civil government possible.

"Black Power": A Rejection of Universal Brotherhood

"Black power," as a philosophy, not merely a call for political organization, concentrates on those things that divide and separate men. It stresses, not the brotherhood of all men, but the brotherhood of the colored. It stresses, not the possibility of voluntary co-operation across race or class lines, but the difficulty or impossibility of such co-operation except on the basis of power relationships. It stresses, not reason and common moral principles, but coercion and force. "Black power," then, tends toward separation rather than integration and toward particularism rather than universalism. In a pluralistic nation, these characteristics tend to produce strife rather than harmony.

The slogan, "black power," is an accurate expression of the fundamental beliefs of those who use it. The emphasis is upon two things: division of men on the basis of race and reliance upon coercion rather than persuasion. The two are logical corollaries. In its emphasis on blackness, the philosophy of "black power" is an answer to the problem of personal identity. Who am I? I am a black man. This identification, primarily on the basis of color, though easy to understand in a nation that has discriminated against Negroes as a group, is still racism and "black power" shares the characteristic traits of racism--blindness and hatred. Racism is blind because it obscures differences that do not conform to racial categories. The Ku Klux Klan, for example, is unable to see real differences in the intelligence, achievements, character and political views of Negroes. It sees, instead, only two categories of blacks: "good niggers," who accept their inferior status, and "bad niggers," who don't. The angry preachers of "black power" fall prey to the same blindness. Thus, "black power" advocates can argue that no white man can be trusted, that all whites are racists and that co-operation with whites is possible only when blacks can amass sufficient power to force whites to co-operate. Thus "black power" advocates can group all whites together from the Ku Klux Klan to the

Americans for Democratic Action and call them, indiscriminately, racists. Thus Stokely Carmichael, the leading spokesman for "black power," can lump together a President, Lyndon Johnson, who was instrumental in pushing through Congress legislation that enforced the right of Negroes to vote all across the South--a goal SNCC worked for in vain for three courageous but terror-filled years--and a former Governor, George Wallace, who resisted every attempt to enforce those rights and to remove governmentally enforced segregation. Both, in Carmichael's view, are white, racist hunkies. This is political blindness, induced by racism. It is a distortion of reality so great that it fails to distinguish, on the issue of civil rights, possible allies from steadfast opponents, possible friends from certain enemies. "Black power" is racist, and it is blinded by its racist perspective.

Blinded by race, stung by injustice, the "black power" advocate tends to be filled by an indiscriminate hatred of all whites. Thus the "Man" is the "enemy," a "honky," a "hunky," a "buffoon." The vocabulary is contemptuous, scornful, full of hatred. Thus black unity is organized around hatred of the white: Negro history becomes, simply, a catalogue of white sins; the nation and its policy become "racist" and the center of "international white supremacy." Thus the Negro, living in America, is "trapped behind enemy lines." Thus the Negro who co-operates with whites is "co-opted," an "Uncle Tom," the "white man's nigger." The rhetoric of the "black power" advocate is the language of hatred. It is selective, focusing only on the sins of whites; it is impassioned, stoking the furnaces of emotion to white heat; it is violent, dealing in the images of burning, looting, killing, rebellion and revolution. The "black power" of the extremists is a bubbling cauldron of hatred.

The second major focus of the philosophy, the emphasis on power, flows logically from the first, racism. If whites cannot understand the plight of Negroes, if whites and blacks do not share standards transcending racial lines that make voluntary co-operation possible, then force must be used if co-operation is to exist. Racism, which denies the brotherhood of all men and denies the ability to co-operate voluntarily, necessarily resorts to coercion and often violence and terror. It is understandable then that the rhetoric of "black power" becomes a rhetoric of violence and threats of violence. It is understandable that the orators of "black power" call on blacks to "take up arms!" It is understandable that they threaten race rebellion and race war. In the absence of reason, what alternative is there to threatening that the town or the city or the nation will go up in flames if demands are not met? The emphasis on power and violence is a natural consequence of the despair of reason and voluntary co-operation.

What is "black power" in its fully mature expression? It is racism. Who is the "new man" of "black power?" He is the old man of the Ku Klux Klan--racist, blind, hating, violent, divided from his fellow man, denying reason, coercive. A society may understand what gives rise to such men--injustice, exploitation, indifference, deafness to their pleas--just as it may understand what gives rise to the Ku Klux Klan or Nazism, but it must oppose them and their philosophy because a plural and civilized society cannot be founded on race hatred, despair and violence.

The philosophy of "black power," while predominantly a racist philosophy stressing fragmentation of the human community along lines of color, has within it a considerable emphasis on economic classism. Thus it stresses the plight of the poor, occasionally the white as well as the colored. Thus it postulates, at some time in the future, the possibility of an alliance of the poor of both races. Logically, however, to stress both racism, which calls for distrust of all whites, for a world revolution of the colored against whites and for race warfare, and economic classism, which calls for an alliance of the poor of all races against the rich exploiters of all races, is inconsistent. The factor which has made the combination of racism and economic classism possible even in part is that, in this nation, to be black has been, for most people, to be poor, and to be poor has been, disproportionately, to be black. The same thing applies, with some exceptions, across the world. White nations tend to be rich nations, colored nations tend to be poor nations. On this basis, racism can also be classism, and logically inconsistent doctrines can be merged. Nevertheless, the contradiction is real and causes problems. There are, after all, poor whites and there are blacks who are not poor, and they must be explained in some manner. The problem of poor whites is dealt with by pointing to existing racism and putting the time of alliance off into the indefinite future; the problem of blacks who are not poor is settled by explaining them as "co-opted Uncle Toms" who have tried, unsuccessfully, to become white in the image of their colonial masters. Racism, in other words, has been prevailing over classism in the "black power" movement. As late as 1965 there was considerable emphasis in SNCC upon the common plight of the poor of both races; since the introduction of the "black power" slogan, however, the emphasis, increasingly, has been on the division along color lines.

The differences between nonviolence and "black power" as philosophies are fundamental. Nonviolence preaches the brotherhood of all men while "black power" preaches the brotherhood of race; nonviolence asserts that persuasion and voluntary co-operation are possible across the boundaries of race, class and nation while "black power," despairing of persuasion, intends to force co-operation by the use of power; nonviolence tends toward and seeks integration of the human community while "black power" calls for separation and tends toward the fragmentation of the human community along color lines; nonviolence, used prudently and responsibly, is compatible with and even a useful supplement to pluralistic democracy while "black power," by its denial of reason and common values and by its blindness and hatred, fosters division and threatens the possibility of democratic institutions.

Theoretical Claims of Nonviolence and Violence

Nonviolence: The Problem of Definition

There are problems in dealing with nonviolence on the theoretical level because nonviolence is an ambiguous term that is applied to quite different types of action. Thus prayers, fasting, picket lines, boycotts, rent strikes, sit-ins and mass civil disobedience have all been termed nonviolent. It is difficult to find the principle that can unify such diverse actions. The distinction is sometimes made between soul force and physical or brute force. The former, presumably, is spiritual, based on love, and it seeks reconciliation through conversion of the will of the opponent; the latter, presumably, represents the use of physical force to coerce the unrepentant will of the opponent. The problem of the fittingness of the moral distinction between brute force and soul force will be dealt with in the section on the morality of nonviolence; suffice it to point out here that various actions labeled nonviolent are not easy to fit into the category of soul force as opposed to physical or brute force. Private prayer is certainly nonviolent soul force; a mass public prayer march to a courthouse in defiance of a ban may be, and is certainly perceived by many to be, something more. Fasting unto death may represent the testimony of a soul; it also results in the destruction of a body and may result in the coercion of an opponent's will. Economic boycotts undoubtedly represent the testimony of souls; they are felt, however, as an attempt to coerce the will and in many cases they can cause mental or even physical suffering--as Negroes who have lost jobs, credit, or land because of attempts to assert civil rights can testify. Sit-ins and stand-ins may represent the testimony of souls; they also physically obstruct access to certain locations on many occasions. Nonviolence, then, may be soul force, but it may work by coercion rather than persuasion and it may pose physical as well as spiritual problems to its opponents.

To make sense of the term nonviolence, some classification of its different forms or levels must be made. Some religious perfectionists, Tolstoy, for example, have interpreted nonviolence in terms of nonresistance to evil. In Christianity this stems from Christ's injunction to "resist not evil." Others mean by nonviolence a form of resistance by persuasion. Still others accept coercion as being a form of nonviolence under certain conditions. Thus, one who preaches nonviolence will not resist evil, another will attempt to deter evil by persuasion, still another will resist coercively, but will stop short of the use of physical violence or terror. One difficulty with this classification of the different levels of nonviolence is that the categories--nonresistance, resistance by persuasion, resistance by coercion--are based mainly on logic, not on the theories of nonviolence themselves. These theories, and their advocates, often fail to distinguish between logically quite different types of action. For purposes of analysis, however, distinction between the three levels of nonviolence is helpful.

Nonviolence: The Moral Claims

Some defenders of nonviolence in social action have claimed that they were bound by conscience to use nonviolence rather than any form of violence. Nonviolence, to them, is a way of life, a moral imperative, binding at all times. Nonviolence, in this view, is always morally superior to violence. The moral superiority of nonviolence is attributed to several factors: first, nonviolence is an expression of love which accepts punishment upon itself rather than imposing it upon the opponent; such self-sacrificing love is held to be redemptive to both parties in the dispute--morally and psychologically to the sufferer and by persuading, hence converting, the opponent. Second, nonviolence is held to be morally superior to violence because it persuades a man by appealing to his conscience and better instincts rather than by coercing him against his will. In this way respect is shown for the opponent's freedom and dignity and the chain of violence--hatred leading to hatred, violence to violence--is broken. Third, nonviolence is superior because it is spiritual or soul force rather than physical force, and the former is the law of our species whereas the latter is the law of the brute. Fourth, nonviolence is superior because it is commanded by religious faith.

The application of these claims for the moral superiority of nonviolence to specific types of nonviolence poses difficulties, however. For example, one of the common forms of nonviolent action in America has been the economic boycott. Yet the economic boycott fails in several ways of having the moral superiority claimed for nonviolence. First, the economic boycott is coercive, not persuasive. It depends upon coercing a man against his will rather than converting him by appealing to his conscience. An effective boycott threatens loss of jobs to individuals, often relatively innocent ones at that, and it threatens bankruptcy or loss of profits to an institution. Economic boycotts, then, are a form of force or coercion, not a form of persuasion, and they lack the moral superiority of the latter. Second, the economic boycott may cause physical and mental suffering and anguish, not only upon the boycotters, but upon those boycotted. It does not take the suffering upon itself, then, at least not upon itself alone. Finally, the threat of bankruptcy, loss of job, or conceivably starvation in an extreme case may be an application of soul force rather than brute force, but the moral distinction between the two is difficult to perceive in view of the similar consequences. In sum, one form of nonviolence, the economic boycott, a form of coercive nonviolence, neither depends upon the moral conversion of the opponent nor takes the suffering entirely upon itself. On the contrary, the economic boycott may cause suffering of great intensity, loss of economic security and loss of property. It may force a man, against his will and judgment, to perform actions he intensely dislikes. It may cause desperation that leads to violence and in extreme cases it could cause death. This type of nonviolence, coercive nonviolence, does not possess those qualities which are said to give nonviolence its moral superiority.

In addition, even though coercive nonviolence may lead to suffering--by those who participate in the boycott, by those boycotted and by the often relatively innocent employees of the boycotted firms or merchants--it may still fail to achieve its goals, surely a morally ambiguous accomplishment at best. In Tuskegee, for example, the Negro economic boycott of white firms following the gerrymandering of the city's boundaries to exclude Negro voters lasted four years and closed down twenty-six white businesses, but it failed to coerce whites into giving Negroes back their political rights. Coercive nonviolence, then, sacrifices those qualities which are said to give nonviolence its special moral status in order to achieve effectiveness, but effectiveness may elude it. It is left, in some cases, with neither the special moral virtues of nonviolence nor the presumed effectiveness of coercion, and it is, therefore, unreasonable to defend it as universally applicable and moral.

Persuasive nonviolence may have a better claim than coercive nonviolence to the status of a moral absolute. It too, however, faces serious objections. One objection derives from the fact that persuasion ordinarily takes time, often a great deal of time. It is difficult to persuade people of the injustice of their actions, especially if those actions are sanctioned by longstanding social customs or result in privileges. Yet those who rely solely on persuasion are accepting whatever degree of evil that coercion could have prevented for the whole time it takes persuasion to become effective. Worse, there is at least a chance that in particular cases persuasion will be ineffective. If it is, then doctrinaire adherence to persuasive nonviolence amounts to acceptance of evil. A third possibility exists. It is that the oppressors will indeed be persuaded of the injustice of their position, but still remain unwilling to give up their position. In the case of South Africa, for example, even if the whites were convinced of the injustice of their position, they could only give it up by voluntarily sacrificing economic and political control of the nation. Such a sacrifice would endanger their economic and even their physical survival, especially in view of their past actions. The problem reduces itself to this. Much injustice confers advantage, even great advantage, to those committing it. Such people or groups are capable of extensive rationalization of their position, and even if their powers of rationalization fail, they still have powerful incentives to maintain their position. It is one thing to doubt the justice of one's actions or privileges; it is quite another to act on those doubts to the extent of sacrificing one's social, economic, political or even physical survival. Some degree of coercion may have to assist persuasion in such cases, though persuasion remains vital. In practice the nonviolent movement has accepted these qualifications. In the Negro protest, for example, the advocates of nonviolence have sought federal intervention to prevent the worst abuses; persuasion and the changing of hearts can take place later. It is, after all, difficult to see why the evil must be allowed until every last trangressor not only sees his sin but gives it up. There is some chance of conversion at a later date; there is none of preventing an evil already done. It may be added that if the problem is ignorance or prejudice, if a man does not recognize the evil of his actions despite his potential good will, then he may be grateful later that he was restrained from the evil now. In sum, to make an absolute of persuasive nonviolence is to accept some sacrifice of the innocent and of justice unless the persuasion is both immediately effective and results in voluntary sacrifice of privilege and vested interest. Such a combination is rare.

Nonresisting nonviolence, the third basic type of nonviolence, is subject to rational attack because the refusal to resist evil amounts, in practice, to giving in to evil. Evil is difficult enough to combat in any circumstances and failure to resist it is to give it full reign. Indeed, one of the primary tenets of nonviolence, as taught by Dr. King, is that it is immoral to co-operate with evil, that it is a moral obligation to resist evil. Refusal to resist, Dr. King argues, sacrifices the innocent and lulls the oppressor. Indeed, the oppressor may not even realize that he is oppressing unless he is resisted. In Dr. King's view, nonviolence is resistance and nonresistance is immoral. Certainly reason would hold that nonresistance to evil allows evil to expand unchecked, hence nonresistance would fail to be morally correct in all circumstances.

These arguments skirt one of the main defenses of nonviolence--the religious defense. Nonviolence is held by many to be a moral imperative validated and commanded by their religion. In the United States that religious source is ordinarily Christian. Nonviolence is held, by these people, to be an expression of the teachings of Christ, especially of the Sermon on the Mount. There is a religious answer to this argument, however, at least insofar as it applies to nonviolence defined as nonviolent resistance to evil. This answer has been made by Reinhold Niebuhr,[1] one of the major Protestant theologians of this era. Niebuhr argues that Christ was preaching nonresistance to evil, not nonviolent resistance. Christ's counsels are not a method of psychology whereby we may morally disarm and convert our opponents, Dr. Niebuhr argues, but an example of perfect love ending on the Cross. Christ conquered death, but not evil in this life and not the Romans. Whatever the story of Christ may be taken to mean, he argues, it cannot be taken as an earthly success story validating nonviolence as a means of defeating evil and establishing justice. Still, the foregoing

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1. See, for example, D. B. Robertson (ed.), Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), the section "Love and Justice and the Pacifist Issue," pp. 241-303.

argument does not answer those who take literally the injunction to "resist not evil." To these Dr. Niebuhr answers that there is no vantage point of guiltlessness in this life, that nonresistance is the acceptance of evil and injustice whereas resistance falls short of perfect love and causes moral ambiguities of its own. He falls back, finally, upon the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith--that our works, even our best works, fall short of perfection and only by God's grace and mercy are we saved. This, of course, is one Christian position among several, but it emphasizes two important points. First, the Christ story is not a story of earthly resistance to injustice, hence it is not strictly comparable to the modern nonviolent movement. Second, Christ, from the Christian view the one example of perfect goodness upon earth, ends his life on the Cross, crucified; the symbol of Christ upon the Cross is a symbol, not of earthly success, but of complete sacrifice. According to Reinhold Niebuhr, then, to resist evil is to go beyond the scriptural command, even if that resistance is nonviolent in nature, and nonresistance to evil is a morally guilty position allowing the victory of evil. In the dominant Roman Catholic view, on the other hand, the injunction to "resist not evil" is seen as a counsel of perfection, binding only on the few seeking perfection, and not applicable or morally necessary to the common social life. Most Christians, then, do not accept nonviolence, of any variety, as morally obligatory in all circumstances. Still, there is no final answer to the Christian whose faith demands of him nonviolence unless he is shaken in that faith by the fact that nonviolence may sacrifice the innocent to the guilty and justice to injustice, or by the fact that other Christians disagree with him on the proper interpretation of the faith.

Some defenders of nonviolence defend nonviolence as a universally applicable technique, morally superior to any alternatives, and specific grounds are given for these claims. The reply has been that those qualities which are said to give nonviolence its moral superiority do not apply well to coercive nonviolence, which sacrifices those qualities for an effectiveness it may not achieve, that persuasive nonviolence may accept an unnecessary amount of evil by refusing to use coercion before persuasion becomes effective, and that nonresisting nonviolence defies common sense and morality by allowing evil to go unopposed even though evil unopposed is likely to be evil triumphant. The conclusion was that nonviolence can only be held to be a moral imperative binding in all situations on some ground transcending reason. Religious faith, of course, may be such a ground, but even here the argument for nonviolence is subject to attack: first on the grounds that the life of Christ, source of the faith in nonviolence for most of its defenders in this nation, is not an example of earthly resistance to evil; second on grounds that Christ's life does not give an example of nonviolence conquering social evils; and third on the grounds that Christ preached nonresistance to evil, not nonviolent resistance to evil. To those who, by faith, accept nonresistance to evil, reason replies that nonresistance sacrifices the innocent, hence is not a guiltless position necessarily to be preferred to coercion or violence, and religion may reply with either the Reformation doctrine of salvation by faith alone or the Roman Catholic doctrine that certain of Christ's teachings, such as "resist not evil," are counsels of perfection, applicable only to the few, not to all social life. In sum, nonviolence cannot claim, on grounds of reason, to be a moral imperative binding in all circumstances.

The Theoretical Charges against Violence

Defenders of nonviolence argue for their doctrine by contrasting it, favorably, with the use of violence. In so doing, they level certain theoretical charges against the use of violence that need to be examined. The first of these charges is that physical violence is equatable with brute force as opposed to soul force or, in a different expression, that physical force is equatable with hatred as opposed to love. Neither of these equations is necessarily accurate. In the first place, hatred is a force of the soul or spirit quite as much as is love. Furthermore, hatred, as a form of soul force, may be expressed either violently or nonviolently, physically or non-physically. Economic boycotts, for example, a standard device of the nonviolent movement, can be used to destroy the systems of racial segregation or to protect them. In the recent past, lawyers, newspaper editors and others who expressed views contrary to the prevailing mood in the white South suffered economic and social boycotts which were, in some cases, quite effective. Hatred, then, is a force of the soul, quite as much as is love, and it may be expressed nonviolently as well as violently. Nonviolence, then, cannot simply be equated with love and soul force.

Equally mistaken is the simple equation of violence or physical force with hatred. Physical force need not represent hatred; indeed, police forces, which customarily have recourse, ultimately, to physical coercion or violence, when not misused, protect the innocent from the lawbreaker and serve to reduce the total amount of violence and suffering in the community. In the case of police forces, then, where the power is not misused, the threat or use of physical force and violence is an instrument of reason and justice, not hatred, and it serves to protect the harmony and reduce the total level of violence and suffering in the community. Certainly the advocates of nonviolence have recognized this for they have called, again and again, for the intervention of the federal government and even the creation of a federal police force in order to protect the rights of civil rights workers and Negro citizens in the South. They have called, too, for the passage of civil rights legislation and for its enforcement, though that enforcement may depend, ultimately, on the threat or use of violence and physical force, as it did when troops were sent to Little Rock and Oxford in order to enforce court orders. Theorists of nonviolence did not chide the federal government then for resorting to physical force, nor did they equate that force with hatred.

It may be thought that it is private acts of physical force to which theorists of nonviolence refer when they condemn physical violence as hatred. Even here, though the case is stronger, it will not stand. The man who, in the absence of a policeman, subdues a madman by physical force does the community a service by protecting it. There is no reason to suppose that his act is an act of hatred. Had he stopped to reason with the madman, innocent people might have been killed. That would have been no service to the innocents, nor to the madman for that matter, for he might later be cured of his affliction and be grateful then that he was halted from destructive acts when not in control of himself. The case of the madman may seem fanciful, but society recognizes the right of self-defense in the absence of the policeman, and the grounds are similar. When reason and persuasion are insufficient, then it is better that physical force be used to protect the innocent than that the innocent be sacrificed in the name of nonviolent love. Thus the absence of federal force in Mississippi in the summer of 1964 was not an expression of love for those students who were struggling, nonviolently but fruitlessly, for the legal rights of American citizens against all the forces of public and private repression. That absence of federal intervention, which left the students to protect themselves by nonviolence and persuasion, allowed a high and unidirectional level of violence and that absence of federal intervention sacrificed legal rights and justice. That absence of federal force was in good part responsible for spawning an embittered SNCC that was much less committed to nonviolence and peaceful change within the system. By the same token, the effective intervention of the federal government in enforcing the voting rights of Negro citizens the next year reduced the level of violence in Mississippi, even though that federal intervention was backed, potentially, by physical force and violence. Physical force, then, cannot be simply equated with hatred and the refusal to use force with love. In sum, the first charge against violence, that violence represents hatred and brute force, whereas nonviolence represents love and soul force, is untrue at least part of the time. There is no necessary correlation between physical force or violence and hatred or between nonviolence and soul force or love.

The defenders of nonviolence level a second charge against violence--that violence simply leads to more violence in an unending chain of hatred, revenge and destruction. This argument is often couched in terms of international politics where wars, presumably, lead to the humiliation of one side, and that leads in turn to a desire for revenge and to further wars. This argument is plausible because the chain of events described coincides closely with much of the history of warfare. Nevertheless, the sequence is not invariable. World War I led, fairly directly, to World War II, but the sequence after World War II is not as clear. For one thing, the United States and Britain, victorious powers in the war, are now on quite friendly terms with both the West German and Japanese governments, the vanquished powers. There are a number of reasons for this--the type of peace imposed, the international balance of forces, and others--but the fact remains that two nations, conquered by violence, are now on friendly relationships with the nations that conquered them, and this despite the total nature of the war that was fought. Violence, in international relations, does not always breed an unending chain of hatred, desire for revenge, and further violence. Neither does the refusal to use force, or to threaten its use, guarantee peace and friendship, as British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlin found out at Munich and after.

The same principles concerning the use of violence apply domestically that apply in international relations. The use of physical force and violence by police, for example, does not invariably lead to revenge and counter-violence at a later date; neither does the absence of police force guarantee peace and harmony. Aggression is a part of the human experience; force, or the threat of it, is sometimes needed to restrain it. The history of the nonviolent movement provides an illustration of these points. There was less violence and suffering, less racial injustice and probably less race hatred, certainly less defiance of the law in Mississippi in 1965, 1966 and 1967 after the federal government began to intervene with laws, pressure and potential force than there was in 1964 and before when the absence of federal intervention allowed and even invited Mississippi whites to impose their will on Mississippi Negroes and civil rights workers by force and violence. Negro armed resistance might have produced even more of a bloodbath, but sole reliance on nonviolence proved inadequate to prevent abuse and violence, or hatred, and the absence of federal force allowed enormous bitterness to develop between SNCC and Mississippi whites. Had the federal government intervened earlier that bitterness and hatred might now be less, and the nation might have been spared the development of a black racism preaching violence similar to the white racism that preceded it. In sum, the argument that use of violence leads to an unending chain of hatred and destruction is wrong on two counts: first, use of violence does not invariably lead to an unending chain of revenge; and second, the refusal to intervene, with violence if necessary, may actually produce more violence and hatred and desire for revenge than does intervention. Violence is a tool, not invariably more productive of hatred and destruction than its alternatives, and it can be used, like nonviolence, for good ends or bad, wisely or foolishly. The charges of nonviolence against violence, to the extent that they are put in absolute and invariable terms, are false. Violence does not always represent hatred and lead to an unending chain of revenge; nonviolence or the absence of violence does not always represent love and lead to peace or reconciliation.

The Special Merits of Nonviolence and Violence as Techniques of Social Change

Both nonviolence and violence have special merits as techniques of social change. The merits of each deserve an examination. The first merit, or advantage, of nonviolence[1] is that its use may moderate a conflict and allow the faculties of reason and conscience to play a greater role than is normal in violent conflicts. When both sides in a dispute resort to violence, the role that reason and morality play is reduced for the question is settled mainly by might, not right, and the violence of each side hardens the heart and strengthens the determination of the other. Nonviolence, on the other hand, when accompanied by that true spirit of charity so eloquently described by its defenders, such as M.K. Gandhi and Dr. King, reveals a willingness to reason with the other side, a refusal to condemn the other side as irredeemable, a willingness to accept a good part of the suffering upon oneself voluntarily, that may allow the other side to examine the issue more reasonably and in something closer to an objective manner. This, in turn, may make a settlement and reconciliation easier.

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[1] These arguments are taken, in large part, from the arguments in Moral Man and Immoral Society, pp. 234-256.

Second, nonviolence, by refusing to resort to force and by voluntarily accepting upon itself the penalty for any violation of the law, robs its opponents of the moral conceit that they alone stand for preservation of law and order. This is a major advantage for those who use nonviolence for it may reduce the self-righteousness of the opposing side and withdraw from it a strong rationale for its position and the strong support of all those who fear lawlessness and violence. Nonviolence, then, may rob the privileged groups of one of their best defenses, the idea that they are defending, not their privileges, but the great principles of law and order.

Third, nonviolence has the merit of revealing the opponent, should he resort to violent repression, as unreasonable, immoderate and quite possibly unjust. Indeed, the contrast provided by violence being heaped on nonviolent demonstrators poses the moral questions in quite dramatic terms and this may serve to do one or both of two things: first, it may deprive the opponents of the continued public support which makes their resort to violence possible, for the use of power, especially in a democracy, depends ultimately on public support, and second, it may so outrage spectators, near or distant, that effective intervention is secured, as in the civil rights acts of 1964 and 1965. Use of nonviolence, then, may reduce the ability or will of an opponent to use his force and it may bring outside intervention--either a special merit in the case of an unjustly treated minority lacking the force of the majority.

Finally, nonviolence provides an alternative to pure persuasion, which is rarely enough to get a privileged group to give up its privileges, and violent revolution, which may often fail, especially in the case of an abused minority. The alternative provided by nonviolence is a moral confrontation, often leading to a crisis, that combines persuasion with pressure and makes evasion of the issue difficult. While the response may be repression, nonviolence may inhibit that response or turn it to its own advantage, and the choice of nonviolence gives reason and conscience every chance to play a major role in any settlement.

The choice of nonviolence as a technique of social change has special advantages. First, it maximizes the opportunity of reason and conscience to play a role in disputes. It may, thereby, make settlements easier and reconciliation possible. Second, nonviolence robs the opponent and others of the notion that what the opponent is defending is law and order. This may allow the true issues to emerge and public support to swing to the protesters. Third, nonviolence may reduce the ability and will of the opponent to use force or violence or, if violence is used to suppress the demonstrators, the moral question may be posed in such stark and one-sided terms that spectators, near or distant, will intervene in favor of the protesters. Finally, nonviolence provides an alternative to either pure persuasion or violent revolution, neither of which is likely to be successful in righting injustices against an abused minority. The special roles of nonviolence in the Negro protest movement, especially that of bypassing, initially, the formal political processes of democracy without revolting against or undermining those processes, have already been mentioned.

Nonviolence, then, has special merits in a conflict, but violence has its own particular advantages, and these sometimes outweigh those of nonviolence. The first advantage of violence or the threat of it is that where power is sufficient, the very possibility of its use may eliminate the need to use it. The threat of violence, then, may remove the need for violence and reduce or eliminate suffering and conflict. Second, where force is sufficient, its utilization may be quick and decisive, and a conflict that would drag on and on, building hatred and suffering, where nonviolence was relied upon, may be ended quickly. Thus SNCC tried to register voters in Mississippi for three years with little success but with a harvest of violence, suffering and hatred whereas the federal government, once it intervened, was able to gain compliance and enforce the right of Negroes to vote without even being compelled to use violence or force. Third, violence can, in theory, be more selective than an economic boycott or similar tactic of nonviolence. Thus a court order, for example, which may be backed ultimately by force, may be quite precise in specifying to whom it applies, whereas nonviolence, in order to get at the same person, perhaps the owner of a store, might have to undertake an economic boycott that would harm the relatively innocent employees, some of whom might be laid off before the employer even considered changing his course. Violence, then, like nonviolence, has its special merits, and prudence, not doctrinaire adherence to principle, is called for in deciding between them.

Abstractly, the advantages of nonviolence and violence may be compared with advantages apportioned to each. Concretely, in relation to the position of Negroes in America, where Negroes constitute a small minority of the population, concentrated in ghettos which could be surrounded and isolated, possessing only small arms, confronted by police, national guard units and the armed forces of the federal government, to counsel armed revolt is to counsel isolation, separation and suicide. The truth of the matter is that nonviolence has been productive for the Negro in America--directly it integrated many facilities in the sit-ins, indirectly it brought the coercive power of the federal government to bear in the 1964 and 1965 civil rights acts establishing desegregation of public accommodations, fair employment laws, and enforcement of voting rights and in administrative orders supporting, for example, school desegregation. Negro violence, on the other hand, has not been productive. Negro violence did not emancipate the slaves, establish the right to vote, eliminate segregation or bring white co-operation in eliminating the economic problems of the black poor. It did help the undoubted rise of a white backlash and make "crime in the streets" one of the most emotionally loaded issues of American politics. Nonviolence, no doubt, faces greater difficulties in the immediate future; violence faces impossible difficulties. Nonviolence offers hope, violence offers a defiant gesture that solidifies the opposition and makes co-operation difficult if not impossible. Nonviolence preserves and builds communication and community, brings into play reason and conscience, and utilizes the processes and powers of government and democracy. Violence sacrifices all these things for an expression of frustration, bitterness and despair. Nonviolence, productive in the past, offers the prospect of further gains. Violence offers only chaos and surrender to second-class citizenship.

The Negro Protest and American Democracy

The history of Negro protest in America may be viewed, as Dr. King viewed it, as a succession of efforts by different techniques to gain entrance into the society. Each technique has given way to another when it appeared, to Negroes, that the older technique was failing to produce equality. For a time these techniques were clearly within the established institutions--the accommodationism of Booker T. Washington, the legalism of the NAACP. But the established democratic institutions failed to produce that equality Negroes sought. This was, in part, due to the exclusion of Negroes from those democratic institutions, especially in the South. Even to gain admittance to the democratic framework, however, Negroes had to go outside that framework in nonviolence and nonviolent civil disobedience. The moral confrontation produced by those techniques produced sufficient gains to bring Negroes within the voting public. Yet voting rights alone, political equality, has not been enough--witness the riots of the Northern and Western cities. Nonviolence, even in co-operation with the new voting rights, has not produced gains rapidly enough and great enough to satisfy a substantial portion of the Negro population. The truth is that democracy, defined simply as access to voting box and quasi-majority decisions ("quasi" because of gerrymandering, malapportionment, seniority rule distortion, etc.), offers no adequate safeguards to a despised or exploited minority when it is confronted by a fearful or complacent majority. To say this is to say again that a majority can be tyrannical. But the Negro protest movement's gradual slide toward violence reveals more than that. What the Negro protest movement does reveal is something about the nature of democratic government and some of the preconditions of its success.

Government, of any type, rests on either consent or coercion. Where voluntary consent is given, whether founded on an accepted concept of justice, a religion, a philosophy or merely tradition and habit, governments need exercise only a minimum of force and require only small police forces, not standing garrison armies. Where that consent is absent--in traditional terms, where the government lacks legitimacy--then order can be maintained only by force and fear, by violence and coercion. But the secular and pluralistic democracy with adult suffrage gives up, or is deprived of, many of the props of other societies. It frowns on the weapons of despotism--force and fear, secret police and manufactured unanimity of opinion and it relinquishes, reluctantly sometimes, the prop of a unifying religion that legitimizes it, therefore it depends, in the end, on voluntary consent based on reason, for with free discussion and opinion inequities and injustices, deprivations and inequalities, are soon pointed out and become matters of dissent and disturbance. Where voluntary consent based on reason can be obtained, the fruits are considerable harmony without fear--the best of all governments. Such a democracy becomes a system of institutionalized nonviolence in political affairs. Rulers are changed, periodically, by an electoral decision in which the losers voluntarily accept the verdict and consent to the new order on the sole condition that their right to persuade others not be abridged. The keynote of democracy is a nonviolent politics based on voluntary consent.

What the move toward violence and alienation in the Negro protest movement reveals is that democracy is possible, and pluralism can succeed, only where mutually acceptable political and social settlements are reached. When a group becomes convinced that its interests are ignored and will continue to be ignored, there is no longer any reason for it to accept pluralistic democracy. Pluralistic democracy, then, can maintain internal harmony, without great coercion, only by providing what are perceived by the various groups within the society as not only democratic but just and tolerable political settlements. The unpleasant fact confronting America is that a small but increasing number of American blacks do not consider present or foreseeable settlements of the race question as tolerable, hence they do not consider the American government legitimate and they are withdrawing their consent to that government. To these blacks, police are symbols of oppression, not protection; government is an organization for white supremacy and colonial suppression, not a representative of their interests. Believing this, these blacks see no obligation to accept the draft, obey the laws, or respect the institutions of society. Hating the society, they are willing to destroy it. Put another way, the now annual summer riots in American cities and the threat of guerilla warfare destroy any remaining illusion that pluralism as such, or formal political democracy, or some "invisible hand," guarantees harmony and order in a society, or consent to that society.

It is accurate, but too simple, to say that some blacks are withdrawing consent to American democracy because of what they perceive to be its injustice to Negroes. But why is this? Where is the injustice? Do not blacks now have the vote? Aren't they fully equal politically? Black militants would deny even that on the basis of some denial of the vote in the South, gerrymandering to reduce Negro power and use of such devices as the "at large" election of city councilmen. But even if full political equality were a fact, they would point out the white majority is unwilling to give up all its privileges. What then is wanted? The answer is justice and the measure of justice, when reason is the guide, is full equality and equal respect. The Negro protest movement has consistently declared its goal to be full equality and it has moved from Booker T. Washington's accommodation, to the NAACP's legalism, and finally to nonviolence in order to obtain it. Nonviolence, it may be noted, was perceived by its defenders to be the last alternative to violence and revolt. Its failure to deliver full equality leads logically to the move to violence.

What then is meant by equality, the measure of justice? The term equality is ambiguous. In Aristotle's terms, it may be arithmetical--one man, one vote--or proportional--equal rewards for equals, unequal rewards for unequals. Either type of equality may gain voluntary consent, but in either case equality is the measure of just treatment. Negroes, or any other group, are likely to demand, where free debate is allowed and leaders are not suppressed, equality in the things that particular society considers important--equality of religion in a religious society, equality of material rewards in a materialistic society. Even in the latter, material rewards, equality is subject to varying interpretations. Capitalism is a system of economic inequality (arithmetic inequality), but it can command rational assent as long as there is perceived to be some reasonable relation between rewards and contributions. The greater the arithmetic economic inequality, the more clearly perceived must be the relationship between contribution and reward (proportional equality). The black rebellion or withdrawal of consent may be viewed in these terms. Blacks are unable to see why blacks, disproportionately, must fill the ranks of the poor. Blacks are unable to agree that the very great poverty of blacks in this society is just in view of the greath wealth of this society. The gulf is too great, the reasons for it are unacceptable and unreasonable--prejudice, racism, discrimination, poorer education. Democracy, then, is losing its consent, from many blacks, because it does not deliver justice, defined as full equality with rational grounds for distinctions. There is, then, a moral foundation to democracy. Unless it is to rely on coercion; unless, that is, it is to deny its unique characteristic of institutionalized nonviolence in political affairs resting on voluntary consent, then it must deliver to Negroes, not only majority rule and formal democracy, but justice.

Consent in a democracy rests on the perception of justice which is always a variant of equality. Where that justice is not perceived consent is, finally, withdrawn. Inasmuch as American democracy, despite its democratic institutions, has not delivered full equality to blacks, it may now have to choose between suppression of Negroes by force and violence or a belated delivery of full equality--materially, socially, politically. There is nothing in democracy as a set of majority rule institutions that guarantees what the choice will be. In the absence of a white belief in the equal human dignity and rights of blacks, in the absence, that is, of a common conception of what justice requires, there is nothing to prevent whites from choosing suppression rather than equal treatment of blacks. Democracy defined as universal adult suffrage, in which consent is gained with a minimum of coercion, must rest on a moral foundation that includes a belief in the brotherhood or equality of all men. Where that belief is absent, as in ancient Athens, democratic institutions may be restricted to a few and the obedience of most may be gained by force--potential or actual. Where that belief in equal human dignity has been absent in American democracy, as in the South after the Civil War, no constitutional or legal rights could protect the Negro from exclusion by force. Pluralistic democracy, then, gains its voluntary consent by providing what is perceived by reason to be justice, the measure of which is full equality, and it will choose justice, rather than suppression, only when there is a commonly held belief in human equality. Without deliverance of equality there will be no peace without great coercion; without a belief in equality, there will be no reason for the majority to choose an order based on the consent derived from equality and justice rather than an order based on coercion and fear. The preconditions of success in a free democracy are justice, which allows voluntary consent and obedience, and a belief in the equal human dignity of all men, which makes it worthwhile to seek the consent of those men.

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BIOGRAPHY

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Papers presented:

- "A Critique of Nonviolence," to the spring, 1965, convention of the Association of Social Science Teachers in Atlanta.
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- "Image of the Policeman in the Eyes of the Black Militant," to the spring, 1968, Conference on Law Enforcement in Memphis.

Positions held:

- Visiting Teacher, North Carolina College at Durham, spring, 1964, to spring, 1965.
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